

HEGEL AND LANGUAGE

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Edited by
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Hegel and Language

SUNY series in Hegelian Studies
William Desmond, editor

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State University
of New York
Press

Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany

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For information, address State University of New York Press,
194 Washington Avenue, Suite 305, Albany, NY 12210-2384

Production by Susan Geraghty
Marketing by Susan Petrie

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hegel and language / edited by Jere O'Neill Surber.

p. cm. — (SUNY series in Hegelian studies)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7914-6755-4 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1770–1831. 2. Language and languages—Philosophy. I. Surber, Jere Paul. II. Series.

B2949.L25H44 2006

121'.68'092—dc22

2005015255

ISBN-13: 978-0-7914-6755-8 (hardcover : alk. paper)

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This collection of essays originated in conjunction with the Hegel Society of America's Seventeenth Biennial Meeting on "Hegel and Language," held at the Pennsylvania State University, October 25–27, 2002. Most of the essays have undergone subsequent development and revision as a result of discussions at that meeting. The editor wishes to thank the contributors to this volume as well as the officers and membership of the Hegel Society of America for making this project possible. He would also, in particular, like to thank three of his graduate research assistants: David Hale and Jason Flato for their assistance with the initial editing of the essays included here, and Evgeni V. Pavlov for his crucial contributions toward both the final editing of the essays and assistance with several aspects of the introduction and other matters pertaining to this volume. Finally, he is indebted to Cheryl Ward on several scores: for her final proofreading of the manuscript; for her work on the index; and, most of all, for her sustaining support and encouragement from the conception to the conclusion of this project.

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Introduction

Jere O'Neill Surber

The historical period that witnessed the rise of Kantian philosophy, German Idealist thought, and Romanticism was also the seminal era of modern linguistics and the philosophy of language. Both on the face of it and for numerous more complicated reasons, it would be surprising if those wide-ranging systematic thinkers of this period were not themselves concerned with linguistic issues as a crucial dimension of their overall philosophical projects. As a substantial amount of scholarship over the last thirty years or so has quite firmly established, this was in fact the case.¹ What remains surprising is not that these thinkers of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries gave serious and sustained attention to matters linguistic, but that later scholars for so long paid so little attention to this important dimension of the thought of this period. In particular, the much heralded and allegedly novel “linguistic turn” of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (both, one might add, in the “analytic” and “Continental” traditions), either through historical ignorance or willful neglect, missed a significant opportunity to link itself with and situate itself in relation to what might well be regarded as the “original linguistic turn” of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. More recently, however, some of these historical and conceptual lacunae have begun to be filled in, so that today it is no longer possible seriously to claim, for instance, that the German Idealist philosophers were simply “linguistically naïve,” or that the twentieth century’s alleged “linguistic turn” was unprecedented in the history of philosophy.

Both historically and conceptually, this recent “discovery” of linguistic issues as important and fundamental to the philosophical tradition of Kant and the German Idealists commenced with new approaches to the systematic philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel. From the realization not only of the quantity but of the fecundity of Hegel’s reflections on language throughout his philosophical development, scholars have more recently been led to trace, in a sort

of reverse, “crablike” fashion, their “*Entstehungsgeschichte*” through the works of Hegel’s immediate intellectual predecessors, including such figures as F. W. J. Schelling; J. G. Fichte; such Romantics as the Brothers Schlegel and A. F. Bernhardt; the “Metacritics” J. Herder, F. Jacobi, and J. Hamann; Kant and his immediate successors; and, more recently, Friedrich Schleiermacher and W. von Humboldt.² Out of this has emerged a much more complete and accurate map of the history and contours of these discussions about language, a cartography that in turn sheds considerable new light on the initial starting point of this research, the linguistic thought of Hegel himself.

The present volume, the first anthology exclusively dedicated to Hegel’s linguistic thought, represents, perhaps, both the end of one cycle of scholarship and the commencement of another. On the one hand, all the authors represented in this collection take as now established the importance and centrality of linguistic issues for Hegel’s own thought; they regard this case as already made and draw freely upon the work of those earlier scholars who accomplished this.³ On the other hand, each chapter, in its own distinctive way, quite deliberately attempts to relate Hegel’s own linguistic reflections to later developments or issues of broader and still current philosophical concern. Thus, in the history of Hegel scholarship, this collection stands as something of a watershed.

In the first part of this chapter, I will begin by offering a broad characterization of the linguistic thought within and on the basis of which Hegel’s own views of language emerged; then I will focus more narrowly on the ways in which linguistic issues emerged and were treated by Hegel’s immediate philosophical predecessors, especially Kant, Fichte, and Schelling; finally, I will review the major points in Hegel’s own philosophical development in which linguistic matters were explicitly highlighted. In the second part, I will consider the four main issues with which the chapters in this volume are concerned and review the contributions of each chapter to these debates.

PART I: THE HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF HEGEL’S LINGUISTIC THOUGHT

1. Linguistic Thought in the Later Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

Even a cursory review of the intellectual history of this period will convince the reader that linguistic issues had come into their own as a major focal point of contemporaneous debates. To bring some order into the virtual explosion of research and reflection about language that occurred during the period just preceding Hegel, we can, in a preliminary way, divide these various attitudes and approaches to linguistic issues into three major groups: the empirical, the metacritical, and the philosophical.

The empirical approach,⁴ which largely but not exclusively contributed to the widely recognized founding of “modern linguistics” that occurred during this period, emerged, at least in part, as a result of a greatly expanded mass of “linguistic data” that had become available as a result of the intensive processes of exploration and colonial expansion that had been underway since the advent of modernity. While the study of grammar, especially of ancient Greek and Latin, extended back to classical times, the encounters with a wide variety of unfamiliar languages, many unrelated to what would later be called the “Indo-European” language group, naturally provoked new efforts to formulate grammars for them and explore the roots of their vocabularies. It is hardly surprising that such enterprises were centered in the major colonial nations, especially Great Britain and France. In the German-speaking countries, not yet colonial powers and still feeling the effects of the Reformation, the empirical approach to language initially found a more natural home within the broader projects of “lower” and “higher” biblical criticism. However, with the rise of the early “German phase” of the Romantic movement and the stirrings of nationalist sentiments with which it was often associated, the empirical approach to language soon began to be applied to European languages themselves. Many during this period, like the early German linguists J. Grimm, F. Bopp, and A. Schleicher, regarded important political and cultural issues as turning on the determination of the correct “lineages” of the various Germanic languages. On a parallel front, the German Romantics, to some degree under the influence of the Classicism promoted by J. Wincklemann, F. Schiller, and W. Goethe, engaged in intensive efforts to translate classical authors, especially Plato, and more recent “classics” such as Dante and Shakespeare, into the German language. The former trend of interest in non-European languages, along with a conviction that such research could also shed important light on the structure and functioning of existing European languages, coalesced in the pioneering work of W. von Humboldt, an immediate contemporary of Hegel usually regarded as the “founder of modern comparative linguistics.”

For the most part, this explosion of interest in the empirical study of language served more to highlight language as a crucial, even determining, aspect of the study of history and culture than to provide philosophers with new conceptual insights that might emerge from such studies. That such research—for example the formulation of a grammar for Sanskrit, demonstrating its connection with existing European languages—was an impressive and important intellectual achievement was duly noted by more philosophically inclined thinkers, but, as Kant himself made clear, offered little of importance to the more fundamental conceptual concerns of the philosopher. Nonetheless, the empirical linguistic research of the time did succeed in centrally positioning linguistic issues on the intellectual map; demonstrating that the study of language could indeed be approached scientifically and not

merely as a rhetorical or poetic art; and, as it were, presenting a set of "answers" in search of fundamental "questions" to be posed by those more conceptually or philosophically inclined.

Even before the commencement of the distinctive movement in German philosophy to which Hegel belonged, this broadly empirical thematization of language had already been accompanied by sporadic philosophical reflections upon the significance of linguistic issues for a philosophical understanding of human experience and knowledge. Such earlier thinkers as Hobbes, Locke, Leibniz, Montesquieu, Condillac, Hume, and Rousseau had, in various ways, indicated the centrality of language for the philosophical enterprise itself. Many of their insights and concerns found their way into the German intellectual milieu through the famous "*Ursprungsfrage*," regarding the divine versus the human or "natural" origin of language posed by the Prussian Academy in 1769. J. Herder's famous "Prize Essay" of 1772, written in response to this challenge, catapulted him into the forefront of linguistic debates in the German-speaking lands and set much of the agenda for subsequent German thought about language that would continue well into the nineteenth century.⁵

Herder, responding to the question posed by the Prussian Academy, argued decisively and passionately for its naturalistic origin and development. His principal basis for this, not perhaps entirely original but widely influential, was his insistence that the development and structure of thought and of language are inseparable from one another. On Herder's view, it was true both that language serves as the privileged vehicle or medium for any possible thought and that thought is entirely limited to and shaped by the language in which it is expressed. Herder subsequently expanded this insight into a lengthy and detailed narrative of the "co-development" of human nature, language, culture, and history in his equally influential *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784–91), a work sometimes cited as influential for Hegel's later project of a "phenomenology of Spirit."

Beginning during the 1780s, and to a large extent in reaction against the increasing influence of Kant's Critical Philosophy, Herder's linguistic views, in conjunction with those of that "other famous Koenigsbergian," J. Hamann, came to form the basis for a new and self-conscious approach not just to language but to any human enterprise that employed language as its "vehicle." Under the name "*Metakritik*," a neologism first employed by Hamann in the title of a decidedly anti-Kantian essay of 1783, Herder and Hamann, along with some other like-minded thinkers such as F. Jacobi, launched a sustained linguistic critique of philosophy, particularly the transcendental philosophy of Kant and his followers, that would culminate at the turn of the century in Herder's own detailed elaboration of this viewpoint, his *Verstand und Erfahrung*.⁶

This "metacritical" approach represented, in some important respects, a sophisticated linguistic development of certain strands of earlier empirical,

naturalistic, and skeptical views. While its principal target was the transcendental mode of philosophizing developed by Kant, it could equally well be brought to bear on both pre-Kantian metaphysical views as well as on later “idealistic” developments of Kant’s critical philosophy such as that of Fichte. Always explicitly critical and sometimes highly polemical, *Metakritik* proceeded by a relentless elaboration of the implications, for philosophical discourse and others dependent upon it, of the dual theses of the naturalistic origins and development of language and its complete coextensiveness with thought. With regard to its proximate target, Kantian transcendental philosophy, the *Metakritik* maintained that the “transcendental standpoint,” at best, needlessly restated, in a more obscure “conceptual idiom,” linguistic distinctions already at work in and better accessed by a direct consideration of “natural language,” and, at worse, created a philosophical “phantom language” that then proceeded to introduce distortions and confusions into the language of the “sound human understanding” from which it arose. More broadly, and clearly anticipating the conclusions drawn by Wittgenstein over a century later, the metacritics viewed any philosophical discourse that was not “*Sprachkritik*” (a term first introduced by Herder) as a sort of pathological departure from the “healthy state” of natural language. In its full elaboration, the metacritical position came to argue both that every “philosophy” was merely a linguistic elaboration of the attitudes of its time, themselves creatures of a specific historical level of linguistic development, and that any claim that philosophical thought might occur outside of or transcend its linguistic and historical limitations was intellectual mystification, pure and simple.

This metacritical assault on both the possibility and cogency of any philosophical project that claimed to be more than “*Sprachkritik*” seems to have provoked the heirs of Kant into more explicit reflections upon language, a task Kant himself had, for the most part, neglected. Beginning with Fichte’s monograph-length work on language of 1795 and continuing through Hegel’s “Berlin system” in the 1820s, a fairly continuous strand of philosophical reflection about linguistic issues can be traced through the works of the German Idealists (and others influenced by this movement as well). Although, as we will soon see, they differed considerably in their approaches to and treatments of such matters, their reflections all turned on several convictions that directly opposed those of the metacritics.

Given that all the later Idealists regarded Kant’s Critical Philosophy and its “transcendental turn” as a seminal and determining moment for their own problematics and thought, they could not accept the thesis of the “strong identity” of thought and language proposed by the metacritics. Though Kant himself seemed to have cavalierly dismissed linguistic issues as “merely empirical,” hence falling below the threshold of interest of the transcendental philosopher, it was clear to the German Idealists, beginning with Fichte, that Kant’s “transcendental turn” itself implied that the relation between

thought and language could be neither one of simple identity (as the metacritics held) nor one of simple difference between the conceptual and the empirical (as Kant's own view suggested).⁷ Rather, although the later Idealists were convinced that there were, in fact, philosophically important and reciprocally determining relations between language and thought that demanded further elucidation (as opposed to Kant's dismissive view), they realized that the metacritical idea of their complete mutual determination would (as the metacritics clearly intended) render any further philosophical thought conducted "transcendentally" impossible. Specifically, while it was true that ordinary epistemic (and, one might add, moral and aesthetical) judgments, for which transcendental philosophy sought the "grounds for possibility," were normally expressed as linguistic utterances or sentences; and while it was also true that the transcendental discourse designed to ground them also involved a process of linguistic articulation, the *movement* from the first sort of articulation of ordinary judgments to the transcendental articulation of their grounds involved more than merely linking certain more obscure sentences to others, on the "same plane," that were already clear as they stood (as the *Metakritik* seemed to imply). Somehow (and the German Idealists would differ as to the proper account of this), an "act of reflection," not entirely identifiable with any specific linguistic determination, intervened between the two "levels," constituting the former as an "object of discourse" and the latter as a conceptual or philosophical account of this "object-language" at another, "higher" level of discourse.

Put in broader terms more appropriate to the speculative systematic projects of the German Idealists, one might say that, while language constituted both a necessary and indispensable condition and vehicle for their articulation as well as an inescapable thematic for any philosophical view laying claim to comprehensiveness, it could never be claimed that their philosophical accomplishments or import could be understood by reducing them to some set of linguistic statements considered either separately or conjointly. In one way or another, the German Idealists maintained *both* that thought was a process not entirely reducible to the limitations of "linguistic enstructuration" *and*, nonetheless, that such "enstructuration" was an essential "moment" of the process of thought itself.⁸

From such a perspective, it was natural that, in their reflections on language, these philosophers came to emphasize both the ways in which the processes of conceptual thought accommodate themselves to and enrich concrete linguistic structures, and how language possesses a creative dimension of its own that can guide and even inspire further conceptual development. Throughout the texts of the German Idealists, and most of all in Hegel, one finds both passages suggesting how speculative thought at once is limited by its linguistic modes of expression at the same time as enriching them by employing them as its "vehicle"; and how thought, in turn, can be guided by

the meanings and structures already available within language. That the efficacy of thinking arises only with and can be judged in the form of its linguistic articulation, and that the “linguistic being” of thought is itself philosophically fecund are dual theses, already assumed and well developed by the German Idealists, that have not been surpassed in the otherwise “linguistically obsessed” atmosphere of the twentieth century.

2. *The Linguistic Thought of the German Idealists*

It is interesting and noteworthy that Kant’s critical philosophy and the *Metakritik*, first outlined by Hamann, originated at almost exactly the same time. Indeed, Hamann’s essay bearing this title was written in the course of his attempts to come to grips with and compose a review of Kant’s first Critique just as the original edition was being published. Roughly put, whereas linguistic issues played no specific role whatever in Kant’s first Critique, Hamann read this work as nothing but a complex, elaborate, and ultimately mystifying “linguistic construction.” Although one can find, scattered throughout Kant’s corpus, the occasional reference to linguistic matters, they seem to be predicated upon Kant’s assumptions of a set of fundamental and interrelated dualities, including the conceptual and the empirical, the logical and the grammatical, judgment and sentence, and so on. In every case, linguistic issues, when they arose at all, were immediately associated with the latter member of these Kantian dyads, which amounted to claiming that they were irrelevant to the concerns of the transcendental philosopher. Of course, this left open the riposte, on the part of the metacritics, who made this point very explicitly, that Kant’s own conceptual distinctions were themselves nothing more than further linguistic gestures and devices, hence opening the critical philosophy to a new line of skeptical attack quite different than the Humean skepticism that he had attempted to refute.⁹

It seems that the force of this linguistic attack on Kantian transcendental philosophy was not lost on Fichte, who, after completing his first “outline” of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), turned immediately to composing a lengthy essay explicitly dealing with language and its central role in philosophical reflection.¹⁰ In this essay, and also frequently in his academic lectures until his departure from Jena in 1799, Fichte contributes three important insights to this debate. First, he cites language as among the necessary conditions for “rationality” itself, and thus for the emergence of any philosophy. On Fichte’s account, reiterated in his political works of the same period, he attributes to language the role of permitting the mutual recognition of one “rational being” by another, which, on his view, constitutes, at the same time, the origins of society itself. On such a view, language becomes seen both as the sign of rationality and the privileged vehicle for its expression. Second, Fichte suggests that there are important parallels and mutual relations between the conceptual

structure of thought and the grammatical structures of natural languages. Indeed, he goes so far as to propose that a "transcendental grammar" be formulated that would correspond, in certain ways, to the "transcendental logic" of Kant. However, if these first two theses seem to concede a good deal to the metacritics, his third point must be taken as explicitly opposing them in favor of a defense of transcendental philosophy. It was Fichte who first insisted upon the view, already mentioned above, that, despite the parallels between thought and language, concept and articulation, logic and grammar, there was nonetheless a crucial asymmetry between them as well. Philosophy, according to Fichte, is an incremental process that proceeds by means of a series of "free acts of reflection." Indeed, he described the origin of philosophy as a "*Tathandlung*," a sort of "fact-act," by which consciousness "posited itself as identical to itself." While language provides the necessary means for the expression of this act of reflection, it nonetheless fails to capture both the "act character" of reflection, which each individual has to perform for itself, and the "freedom" of the process whereby any linguistically expressed judgment can itself become the "object" of a further act of reflection. On Fichte's view, then, philosophy itself always involves a "translinguistic" element, namely, the very act of reflection upon its own preceding linguistic accomplishments and articulations.

Schelling, for whom language was a ubiquitous theme throughout the many turns and phases of his long philosophical career, dramatically expanded Fichte's early reflections upon language. While little justice can be done here to Schelling's extensive contributions to these discussions, a few observations especially relevant to Hegel's treatment of language are appropriate.¹¹ In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1801), Schelling assigned to language two crucial and interrelated roles in the overall context of his systematic thought. First, in response to the question of how the "ideal order of Subjectivity (or consciousness)" could find mediation with the "real order of Objectivity (or nature)," Schelling pointed to language as the primary instance of a genuine "Subject-Object." On the one hand, language is the principal and original vehicle by which subjective concepts and thoughts are expressed and thus achieve "objective existence." On the other hand, language, viewed as an objective and concrete existent, is permeated through and through by the historical accomplishments of subjectivity. Language, then, provides the necessary bidirectional mediation whereby "ideal" thought and its concepts can enter the objective order of existence and efficacy, and whereby "real" objects can be appropriated, known, and made possessions of subjectivity or consciousness. Second, since he regarded all art as, to a greater or lesser extent, a complexly mediated "Subject-Object," he proceeded to claim that language itself represents the "original" and "most perfect work of art." And, since he regarded philosophy as an ideal or subjective activity that is condemned to proceed by a process of objectification of any content that it considers, hence

always *representing* but never actually *presenting* the “absolute unity” that he held to be the ultimate aim of any philosophical system, it fell to art, and specifically concretely existing language as a whole in the primary instance, to serve as the privileged manner of presenting, and not merely representing, “the Absolute” itself.

These dual ideas of language as the paradigm case of a “Subject-Object” or an “Ideal-Reality” and as the primary mode of access to “the Absolute” continued to reverberate throughout his later career. Not only did he ascribe to language a pivotal role in his attempts to elaborate his *“Identitätsphilosophie,”* but his later formulations of a “Philosophy of Mythology” and a “Philosophy of Revelation” relied heavily upon his view that the “originary narratives” of culture and religion were precisely specific instances of language unburdened by the objectifications of philosophy and hence genuine manifestations of “the Absolute” in concrete historical forms.

As a very general framework for approaching linguistic issues, Schelling’s reflections were, to a great extent, taken over by Hegel. Of course, Hegel, as his own philosophical differences with Schelling emerged, would come to delimit, qualify, and refine Schelling’s views of language in a number of significant ways, but it remained true that language continued to play a decisive role in Hegel’s philosophy both as an explicit and recurrent theme and as a more general and ubiquitous philosophical problem. To characterize, in a general and preliminary way, Hegel’s differences with Schelling on the issue of language, three points are worth noting. First, since Hegel came to reject Schelling’s tendency to think in terms of two “complementary series,” that of “subjectivity” or consciousness and that of “objectivity” or nature, language came to play a rather different role in Hegel’s systematic thought. Rather than emphasizing language as the generalized “mediation” spanning the gap between subjectivity and objectivity, Hegel’s treatment of language adopted a more “vertical” orientation. That is, the most salient feature of language, for Hegel, was the role it played in permitting and sustaining philosophical reflection in its efforts to move to ever “higher levels” of thought, from experienced differences to higher conceptual identities or unifications of (lower-level) differences. Second, Hegel’s often-expressed antipathy toward the Romantics’ (and, on his reading, Schelling’s) idea of “the Absolute” as transdiscursive and accessible only through a mystifying “intellectual intuition” led him to deny that language, in the general sense in which it was discussed by Schelling, offered some privileged path to the “Absolute.” Rather, while Hegel could still agree that language played a crucial role in the systematic philosophical ascent to “the Absolute,” it was not as some unitary entity like a work of art, but through many and manifold interventions along the way. A token of this is the fact that Hegel’s various discussions of language usually have a specificity and occur in determinate systematic contexts, a feature often lacking in Schelling’s more generalized pronouncements. Finally, in his Berlin writings, Hegel

explicitly addresses the underlying assumption that led Schelling to claim that “the Absolute” was inaccessible to philosophy and that, consequently, philosophy would always remain subordinate to art as a human enterprise. In the most extensive discussion of language in his entire corpus, Sections 457–64 of the Berlin *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel explicitly challenges Schelling’s view that philosophical language can only “represent” thought or “the Absolute” but never “present” it. Rather, Hegel attempts to show that it is precisely language that makes possible the transition from the subjectivity of mere representation to the objectivity (and hence “presentation”) of thought itself. Rather than requiring that the philosopher await the “presentation” of “the Absolute” supplied by the work of art, Hegel comes to reverse the roles ascribed by Schelling to art and philosophy, establishing philosophical thought as the true “presentation” of “the Absolute” and relegating art to the realm of “representation” awaiting the conceptual explication and judgment of philosophy as to the “true content” it possesses, though in still “defective form.”¹²

As in so much else, Hegel’s reflections on language represent a synthesis of much that went before. Unlike Kant, Hegel occasionally invokes various empirical observations about the meanings and grammar of natural languages as relevant to or illuminating for the philosopher. While he grants the meta-critics’ insistence on the challenge posed by language for philosophy, he also insists, along with Fichte and Schelling, that their skeptical claims against philosophy can be answered by a more nuanced consideration of the relations between language and thought. And while he rather clearly appropriated some of the more expansive ideas of Schelling regarding language, he qualifies them through specific discussions more reminiscent of Fichte’s detailed treatment.

3. *Hegel’s Main Texts on Language*

Although, as I suggested above, there are many briefer reflections, invocations, and asides concerning language scattered throughout Hegel’s corpus, there are three principal texts in which Hegel offers more extended and explicit discussions of linguistic issues. It should be noted that each of these occurs at a crucial “moment” or point of transition within Hegel’s overall philosophical project.

Hegel’s initial explicit and extended discussion of language as a central philosophical issue occurs in the course of his so-called *Jenaer Systementwürfe*, which were, in effect, notes for his lectures on logic, metaphysics, and related topics delivered during the middle years of the first decade of the nineteenth century.¹³ In several crucial respects, this early discussion of language clearly remains indebted to Schelling’s views of language discussed above. To begin with, Hegel’s initial treatment of language explicitly constitutes the crucial point of transition from the objective realm of Nature to the subjective

domain of Spirit. On the account offered here, reminiscent of Schelling's claim that language is the paradigmatic "Subject-Object," language is presented as the point of mediation between "external Nature" and "internal Spirit" precisely because it itself is Janus-faced, immediately involving elements of both. On the one hand, it is through language that all that is external and foreign to consciousness is appropriated by consciousness and made its own in the form of concepts. On the other, it is also through language that the "inner content" of consciousness or Spirit first becomes objective through the "ex-pression" or "externalization" (*Äusserung*) of physically audible sounds and visible written marks. Language, as (in Hegel's terms) "the first potency of consciousness" and the "immediate mediation" of Nature and Spirit, is thus the unique link or hinge by which the external becomes internalized and subjective, and the internal becomes externalized and objective.

But, Hegel goes on to observe, while language is the "immediate mediation" of Nature and Spirit, it is itself "internally mediated" in various ways, two of which his discussion especially highlights. First, there is the "internal articulation" of language involving the contrast between signs and names. On Hegel's interpretation here, a sign (*Zeichen*) is an "empty placeholder," a merely formal or structural and passive feature of language that requires the determinate content and contexts provided by experience to become activated and communicatively efficacious. By contrast, a name is a specific and determinate content or result of consciousness's appropriation of external things through the process of naming. His suggestion, at this point, seems to be that language as a whole is a weaving together or textuality (in the etymological sense of this word) made up of signs as its formal "woof" and names as its determinate "warp." In terms of his discussion, which often seems to recast some of Kant's basic distinctions in a linguistic mode, we might say that "signs without names are empty, and names without signs are blind." The second "internal mediation" of language that Hegel discusses concerns the manner in which it serves to mediate spatiality as the (following Kant) fundamental condition for "outer sense" and temporality as that for "inner sense." It is by virtue of language that the fundamental spatiality of the external world becomes appropriated by and made part of the temporality of consciousness in the form of signs and names, and that, conversely, the temporal fluidity of experience and thought becomes "fixed," externalized, and takes its place in the order of objectivity in the "higher form" of articulated and intersubjectively accessible conceptual terms. One is here tempted to suggest that it is upon such linguistic grounds that Hegel offers his initial answer to the Kantian conundrum of the relationship between "receptivity" and "spontaneity."

A second interrelated group of texts concerning language occurs in the preface, together with the initial moments, of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Specifically in the preface,¹⁴ Hegel introduces the notion of the "speculative sentence" (*der spekulative Satz*) that will remain, throughout

his subsequent writings, a fundamental reference point for his thought regarding the nature of language and, more specifically, systematic philosophical discourse. While there are many interpretations of this very involved notion (more on this to follow), it is at least clear that Hegel wishes to insist on the fundamental contrast between “judgment” (*Urteil*, as employed in the tradition and most proximately by Kant) and “sentence” or “proposition” (*Satz*). According to Hegel, any view that regards judgment as the basic constituent of thought and discourse has already decided in favor of a purely formal notion of identity and a merely subjective (or even psychologicistic) interpretation of thought and concept. By contrast, a “sentence” (as Hegel explains this notion in the context of his discussion of the “speculative sentence”) is just as much an objective linguistic entity as it is a vehicle for subjective thinking. Further, a view of thought or language based upon the forms of logical judgment misrepresents the actual functioning of thought as Hegel views it, inasmuch as it treats the result of thought (i.e., the judgment) as bringing into a purely formal identity differences that are somehow pregiven or preconstituted. In other words, judgment in its Kantian inflection is language reduced to the simple predicative form, which itself is a creature and, as it were, symptom of the operation of the understanding (*Verstand*). By contrast, the notion of the “speculative sentence” (whatever else Hegel may have meant by this) highlights the fact that, for Hegel, language is associated, most fundamentally, with the self-determining processes of reason (*Vernunft*), but that, when reduced to the merely formal structures of logical judgment, becomes an inert and empty shell incapable of expressing the power of reason to produce and articulate the broader and more complexly mediated unities involved in genuine thinking.

Although Hegel often insists, at various points, that genuine philosophical thinking (and indeed the whole of his version of logic) can only be articulated “speculatively,” that is, not in formal logical judgments but through the deployment of the dynamics involved in “speculative sentences,” he also suggests that ordinary or natural (i.e., nonphilosophical) language also contains clearly discernible “speculative” traces. (His favorite example is “*aufheben*,” a key term in his own philosophical thought as well, that, all at once, means to lift up, to negate, and to preserve.) Further, in the opening moves of the *Phenomenology*, it is the “speculative” nature of language itself that defeats the attempts of consciousness to articulate its own “certainty” about the “truth” of various interpretations of experience. The very restless and dynamic character of language turns out to be more “truthful” than any attempt of consciousness to articulate and fix the meaning of what it takes to be its object in some simple predicative form; rather, consciousness, in its very statement of its “certainty,” always ends up saying something other and more than it actually intends, and it is this intrinsic unruliness and restlessness of language itself that fuels the moves from one attitude of consciousness to another.

Finally, Hegel's most sustained and explicit discussion of language occurs in the *"Berlin Enzyklopaedie"* (§ 457–64), an outline with commentary, written to accompany lectures delivered in the 1820s and usually regarded as presenting the final and mature form of his systematic thought.¹⁵ This passage certainly merits close study, since here Hegel invokes some already familiar themes, reworks others, and also adds a significant number of new and sometimes surprising insights, proving conclusively that his interest in linguistic issues had continued unabated since their initial appearance in the Jena "system sketches." However, what is most philosophically significant about this discussion is its systematic location. It occurs under the general heading "Psychology," which forms the concluding section of "Subjective Spirit," the first of the three major divisions of the *Philosophy of Spirit*. "Psychology" itself contains two major subdivisions, the "theoretical" and "practical," and the discussion of language constitutes the "middle moment" of the former under the title "Representation" (*Vorstellung*). As such, the systematic function of this discussion is to effect the absolutely crucial transition from "Intuition" to "Thinking." Under the sequential headings of "recollection" (*Erinnerung*), "imagination" (*Einbildungskraft*), and "memory" (*Gedächtnis*), Hegel shows how representational images, when taken up by the imagination, find their expression in various types of signs. These, in turn, find their "external expression," and become communicable, when they assume the various forms constituting spoken and written language. The outcome of this process are names and words, which permit intuitions and meanings to become fixed and thus reidentifiable in "memory" as "the same" upon repeated occurrences of the associated name or word. On Hegel's account, it is precisely this capacity of language to stabilize and permit the reidentification of meanings within the temporal flux of experience that is the necessary precondition for any "higher order" thinking. And it is thinking, when externalized through language, that permits the passage from the realm of subjectivity to that of "Objective Spirit" and its "higher realms" of law and the state and, ultimately, to "Absolute Spirit" itself. There is, then, probably no more important transition in Hegel's entire system than that effected by his discussion of language.¹⁶

Two points are worth mentioning in conclusion. On the one hand, Hegel did, in fact, remain interested in linguistic matters throughout his career and seemed to maintain a certain common core of convictions about them. On the other, it is also true both that no fully articulated "theory of language" appears in his writings and that the passages that do appear are not always fully consistent, at least in their details. These observations, in themselves, raise a number of broader interpretive and philosophical questions. Is this lack of a fully articulated and consistent theory of language a fatal lacuna for Hegel's broader systematic project? Can, or should, we try to remedy it on the basis of the materials that he provided for us? Or might a rather different approach to language be required in order to supply the basis for what Hegel actually sought

to accomplish in his system? If so, to what “systematic location” would it be assigned; or, would it necessarily stand “outside the system”? I would suggest that these are some of the most fundamental, and philosophically intriguing, issues and controversies underlying the essays collected in this volume.

PART II: CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS OF HEGEL'S VIEWS ON LANGUAGE

The chapters assembled in this volume provide a fine introduction to a much more extensive body of research concerning Hegel's thought about linguistic issues and its significance for central contemporary philosophical discussions. Although areas of overlap inevitably appear, as befits any work on a philosopher as explicitly systematic as Hegel, they can be grouped according to four principal questions: (1) How can “natural language,” admittedly permeated by vagueness, contingency, and historicity, come to serve as the “speculative vehicle” for articulating the sort of determinate and comprehensive philosophical system that Hegel insists is the only adequate form that philosophy can assume? (2) What view of language emerges from a consideration of Hegel's dual demands that it be capable both of articulating “objective” and “intersubjectively valid truths” as well as expressing the profound “inwardness of subjectivity”? (3) What does Hegel's philosophy and his views on language have to contribute to more recent discussions in linguistics and the philosophy of language? (4) What light has the recent poststructuralist reception of Hegel's thought about language shed upon his broader philosophical viewpoint and how effective has been its sustained attack on Hegel's “totalizing philosophical pretensions”?

1. Language and the Possibility of Systematic Philosophy

This collection opens with three chapters that offer different but complementary characterizations of the problems that language poses for Hegel's systematic project, and each then attempts to show how Hegel succeeds in addressing these fundamental issues.

Kevin Thompson's discussion begins with some of the central issues first raised within the “metacritical” and Romantic traditions. Having described the demands that Hegel himself places upon systematic philosophy, he summarizes the major obstacles to be confronted by any such project under the headings of “fragmentation” and “contamination.” By the former, he wishes to indicate the view, expressed in both Romantic literary theory and practice, that language “ultimately seeks to express that which is inexpressible”; by the latter, he intends the “metacritical” conviction that language “is rooted in custom and tradition and . . . [is] thus ineluctably historical.” According to Thompson, Hegel's response to these two important linguistic obstacles to the

possibility of systematic philosophy, problems of which Hegel himself was certainly well aware, is to be found in Hegel's most extended discussion of language in his entire corpus, the section of the *Philosophy of Spirit* mentioned above. On Thompson's illuminating reading of this key section, Hegel subsumes the problems of "fragmentation" and "contamination" under the broader issue of representation. The key to Hegel's answer to these charges involves (negatively) the thesis that "the representational content of language is insufficient to bind words together into meaningful wholes," and (positively) Hegel's demonstration that the internal movement of language itself necessarily leads beyond the limitations of representation to the "immanence of thought" and its concepts. Especially important in Thompson's reading of Hegel is the manner in which various structural features of language are correlated and interact with the various cognitional moments of "memory" that Hegel presents, progressively overcoming the latent "referentiality" of representation in favor of the unification of "being" and "ideality" that defines thinking in Hegel's sense.

Where Thompson focuses upon the more general linguistic objections presented by the "Metacritics" and the Romantics against the possibility of any systematic philosophy, Chong-Fuk Lau formulates the linguistic issues facing Hegel's project in the somewhat narrower terms of the Kantian dilemma between the "natural aspirations" of human reason to seek the infinite or unconditioned and the necessarily finite forms of judgment available in which to express such insights. Lau locates the key to Hegel's response to Kant in Hegel's discussion of the "speculative proposition" (*der spekulative Satz*), found primarily in the preface to the Jena *Phenomenology of Spirit*. On Lau's reading of this important passage, Hegel argues that the very subject-predicate form of judgment, which Kant took to be "the primordial form of all intelligible discourse," is misconceived by Kant as resting on an "original division" and an "asymmetry" between its elements, thus rendering it capable of expressing only the "finite truths" of the understanding, not the infinite "speculative" movement of reason. Whereas the subject-predicate form of the Kantian judgment is ultimately based upon and correlates with the traditional philosophical idea of a "substance and its accidents," the "speculative proposition" presents an "identity-in-difference" of two conceptual determinations. Because the thinking of the "identity-in-difference" of the two terms in a "speculative proposition" can only be a process, not a static structure as in Kant, Hegel is able to link the "speculative proposition" with the very movement of the "thinking subject" rather than remaining confined to a formal understanding of the "subject" as a mere grammatical placeholder referring to some static substance beyond it. The most important conclusion Lau draws is that, on such a reading, it cannot be correct to regard the "speculative proposition" as some "extraordinary" or "special" form of discourse in addition to the more "ordinary" forms of discourse presented by Kant. Rather, Hegel proposes

a completely different way of understanding discourse itself that does not reject the subject-predicate form but functions as its ubiquitous "meta-theoretical" critique and development. As such, all language is implicitly and potentially "speculative" and it is the task of the philosopher to render this explicit and actual.

Angelica Nuzzo begins not with the question of the suitability of "natural language" or "logical judgment" for the conceptual and speculative demands that Hegel places upon it, but with a question regarding the intelligibility of Hegel's own systematic philosophical discourse. Taking seriously Kierkegaard and William James as two critics (among others) who have called attention to the "perversities" of Hegel's dialectical usages of language, Nuzzo attempts to show that the very features of Hegel's alleged "linguistic excesses" that are most frequently cited are, in fact, "constitutive of the dialectical method that structures speculative philosophy as system." In making the point that Hegel's linguistic practices are inseparable from and, in important ways, constitutive of his "dialectical method," Nuzzo cites two important insights of Hegel: the first, found in the opening sections of the Jena *Phenomenology*, that language itself is "more truthful" than any form of "subjective certainty"; the second, found late in the *Science of Logic*, that only after the logic has been articulated can one finally realize the nature of its "method," namely, that it is the linguistic unfolding of "the absolute idea only as the original *word*." Between the first realization that the philosopher must "trust language" over subjectivity and the concluding insight that "language and method" are identical throughout, Nuzzo cites as specific instances of "the cunning of language" Hegelian strategies involving "ambiguities" of terms and "displacements or shifts of meaning." Broadly put, she argues that such devices are neither products of deliberate "perversity" on Hegel's part (as some critics would have it) nor mere incidental by-products of a more logically rigorous "substructure" (as certain of his more sympathetic readers have tried to argue). Rather, they must be regarded as necessary, productive, and irreducible features of the Hegelian "method" once we have grasped Hegel's fundamental insight that language is not merely the "vehicle" or "medium" of speculative thought but constitutes both the condition and the inner life of thought itself.

2. *Language, Subjectivity, and "Objective Truth"*

While the opening chapters address head-on some of the broadest issues concerning the relation between language and the possibility of systematic philosophy in general and argue in favor of the cogency of Hegel's own response to them, the next group brings these issues into a sharper focus. Taken together, they are more concerned with asking, not whether such a systematic project as Hegel's is possible on linguistic grounds, but, granted that it is, what sort of actual "truth" can be claimed on its behalf. Put even

more specifically, the chapters in this section explore Hegel's characterization of the ways in which language functions as the crucial link between our "subjective experiences" and "objective truth-claims" about a shared and transsubjective world.

Jeffrey Reid approaches this issue by focusing upon the question regarding what constitutes the "objectivity" of "*scientific* discourse," where the first term is understood in the special signification that Hegel gives to the German word "*Wissenschaft*." On Reid's view, the "objectivity" of Hegelian "science" is to be sought neither in the adequation of language to being, nor in the fact that language is the articulation of concepts. Both of these readings confine objectivity to the realm of representation and consequently fall short of the "higher objectivity" characteristic of Hegelian "science," whose discourse is "not only objectively true but is also, itself, true objectivity." Rather, he suggests that the proper "objects of (Hegelian) science" are themselves a result of language (in the specific form of names or signs) having already mediated thought and being, thus producing objectively true significations (at the level of representation) that Hegelian "science" must then render conceptual and order within its own systematic perspective. More specifically, whereas the language of representation accomplishes the transition from arbitrary "names" that refer to the "things" of experience, to "words" that have a determinate conceptual content or meaning of their own, Hegelian "science" articulates systematically the *conceptual* objectivity of this content, itself already objective at the level of representation. It is in this sense that Hegel's "scientific discourse" is not only "objectively true" (since its content is the very objectivity of representation) but "true objectivity" (since Hegelian "science" articulates the very structure of objectivity itself). Crucial to Reid's analysis is his reading of Hegel's treatment of the syllogism in the *Science of Logic*, which suggests that the sort of objectivity characteristic of genuine "science" is not to be sought in particular sentences or propositions (however dialectically understood they may be), but in the syllogistic interconnections among their terms, which establish that all concepts are already mediations between thought and being. Reid's discussion of "property" as an example of such an already linguistically mediated objectivity (through the institution of the written contract) that then finds its proper systematic place within "Objective Spirit" in Hegel's system is especially illuminating and suggestive for other extensions of Reid's overall view.

John McCumber's discussion can, in one sense, fairly be read as complementing that of Reid: whereas Reid begins with Hegel's notion of "scientific objectivity" and attempts to show how it presupposes antecedent linguistic mediations within the sphere of representation, McCumber moves in the opposite direction, beginning with the emergence of linguistic determinations within the context of experience and representation and culminating in the "higher objectivity" of Hegelian science. However, McCumber is frank in

claiming that, although the “immanence” of systematic discourse upon which Hegel often insists necessarily requires a theory of language adequate to it, Hegel himself never fully provides this, however many clues lay strewn throughout his works. Thus McCumber himself attempts to construct such a theory on the basis of a variety of materials provided by Hegel. He takes as his general starting point a question that he claims Hegel largely neglects: What is the nature of words, the ultimate “units” of language, and where do they come from? Conceding Derrida’s point that Hegel privileges spoken over written language (for good reasons, it will turn out), he then commences his discussion by asking, more specifically, “What is a ‘sound’?” Following Hegel’s suggestion, a sound must be understood as already a type of “identity-which-embraces-difference,” in the sense that a body produces a vibration that becomes external, resonates in other bodies, and thus negates the body from which it was propagated. In this way, even at the level of mere sound, a “unity-in-difference of inner and outer” is produced, which already provides a rudimentary condition for subjectivity. While many bodies (living or not) can produce “sounds,” only a complex organic body can generate “tones” which serve as the expression of the body’s “internal state.” Tones, however, are necessarily unstable temporal manifestations of interiority that gains a more enduring meaning precisely because its “tonal expression” immediately vanishes. While tones can and must be produced individually (and are already, in one sense, meaningful as expressions of the interiority of the producer), they attain another type of meaning as they take their place within a specific set of other tones. (McCumber provocatively suggests that the distinction between *Bedeutung* and *Sinn* might correspond to these two senses of “meaning.”) Specifically verbal signs (*Zeichen*) emerge, in the first instance, when such tones are stripped of their meaning-contextualization among other tones and appear as “meaningless in themselves.” On the one hand, a verbal sign no longer serves as the immediate expression of interiority; on the other, it is freed of its former “*Sinn*” and becomes capable of entering into a greater array of connections with other signs, themselves equally stripped of their “*Sinn*” and hence “free floating.” Thus arises the word, “a sound arbitrarily connected to a representation.” Like the tone from which it derives, a word is “transient, disappearing,” but unlike the tone, it is “only arbitrarily connected to a representation.” These two features of the word, taken together, constitute the word as the sole and privileged means by which thought (in Hegel’s sense of the free self-determination which is Reason) can first emerge and become articulate. Arriving at virtually the same point as Reid’s chapter and employing very similar terms, McCumber concludes: “For words do not, philosophically considered, ‘refer’ to realities. Rather, they *are* those realities in a higher, more conceptualized form.” In an important final addendum, McCumber suggests how such a “Hegelian theory of language” is capable of addressing some of the well-known objections often made against Hegel’s broader views.

Will Dudley adopts yet a third, though again complementary, approach to the question of the “objectivity” of Hegel’s systematic discourse, offering an interpretation of the differing ways in which language functions within the three spheres of “Absolute Spirit”: Art, Religion, and Philosophy. His argument, intriguingly schematized upon the legal oath “to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” is designed to show that, for Hegel, “only philosophy is capable of accomplishing all three of these goals, and any philosophical endeavor that falls short of doing so is a failure.” To begin with, Dudley argues, it is important to realize that, as spheres of “Absolute Spirit,” art, religion, and philosophy all endeavor (at least in part) to “tell the truth” in linguistic form and that, unlike ordinary consciousness, all already realize that “the truth” involved will be a “particular (or concrete) universality,” not merely the listing of empirical facts or the invocation of abstract concepts. Their differences lie in the ways in which they attempt to “tell the truth” about “particular (or concrete) universality.” Poetry, the most “linguistic” and hence potentially universal of the arts, nonetheless fails to satisfy the dual requirements of “the whole truth and nothing but the truth” because it always tells us “both too little and too much.” It tells us too little because its “universal truth” is always presented or shown in specific forms or individuals (such as characters in a drama), without specifically separating off and specifying the actual “universal” that is being presented. And it tells us too much for the same reason, that is, that it involves many “contingent particulars” (for example, of character, plot, or setting) that are not essential to the “universal” in question. The “symbolic telling” of religion, by contrast, does explicitly distinguish between its “particulars” (e.g., parables or narratives) and the universal meanings represented or symbolized by them. The problem here is that symbols are “nonarbitrary signs,” that is, although certain qualities of the symbol represent the universal to which it points, the chosen symbol also possesses other qualities that are irrelevant or even opposed to its “universal.” Conversely, a certain universal can also be indicated by multiple symbols, each highlighting a different set of qualities. This intrinsic ambiguity of symbols means, again, that “they always say both too little and too much”: too little, because they are restricted to their own “natural qualities,” which never exhaust the “truth” of the universal that they symbolize and require supplementation by other symbols; too much, because they possess additional qualities irrelevant or opposed to the universal that they symbolize. Similar issues occur even when religions introduce the notion of “God,” so long as this is understood in representational terms. From this discussion, Dudley draws two important conclusions. The first is that Hegel’s general avoidance of images, symbols, and examples in his philosophical prose is precisely what allows him to meet the “truth-telling” requirements set forth at the beginning of the chapter; it is precisely this that is required for philosophical discourse to be truly objective. The second is that, nonetheless, Hegel does *not* claim that other forms of linguistic

expression than the philosophical have no role to play within the broader texture of human experience; rather, poetry and religious discourse do address other particular and contingent dimensions of experience such as sensory experience and feeling and hence play an essential role in connecting the “linguistically abstemious” discourse of philosophy with ordinary consciousness and its own native modes of discourse.

These three chapters, taken together, make a strong case against many traditional and contemporary views of Hegel that either characterize his philosophy as an “idealism” barred from making any “objectively valid claims” about “reality,” or as some ramified post-Kantian theory of categories or conceptual structure underlying our ordinary judgments. If we accept the arguments of these three chapters, then we must conclude that either way of reading Hegel will ignore or suppress the crucial role that Hegel assigned to language in mediating subjectivity and objectivity, universal and particular, and ordinary experience and philosophical thought.

3. Hegel and Contemporary Philosophy of Language and Linguistics

While the preceding chapters were primarily concerned with clarifying and developing various of Hegel’s linguistic insights within the context of his own broader philosophical standpoint, the second half of this anthology consists of considerations of Hegel’s linguistic thought in the light of issues arising within later developments in the philosophy of language and linguistics. Roughly, while the next three chapters deal with themes highlighted in the “analytic” tradition, the concluding set focus upon those more characteristic of the “continental” tradition. With regard to the former, the problems of reference, the status of grammatical structure, and linguistic change over time have each served as a focal point for extensive and important discussions throughout much of the period following Hegel. While all three authors acknowledge that these were not issues that Hegel himself directly confronted, at least in their later formulations, they also agree that, even so, Hegel’s linguistic reflections may be deployed in ways capable of shedding considerable light upon them.

Katharina Dulckeit commences her Hegelian intervention in the “analytic philosophy of language” with a review and critique of the major attempts, running from Frege and Russell to the present, to deal with the issue of reference, that is, how language is capable of somehow “connecting with the world” in determinate ways. The problem is philosophically fundamental, she argues, since the failure to produce such a cogent theory will ultimately fall prey to the full force of the skeptic’s attack. According to her overview, the quite extensive number of alternative theories of reference that have been proposed can be regarded as falling under one of three headings: the “Description Theory,” the “Causal Theory,” and “Direct Reference.” Roughly put, the Description

Theory, first proposed by Russell, holds that “names not only have descriptive content, but this content serves as a criterion for identification of the referent.” In the face of such criticisms as that of Kripke that the “identifying knowledge” upon which Description Theories depend is neither necessary nor sufficient for “fixing” a reference to its corresponding object, hence always and on principle “incomplete” since such descriptions will always be so, others (including Kripke himself) have proposed various types of Causal Theories to remedy this defect. On such theories, there is always some originary event in which the particular object is “baptized” with a given name, hence fixing its reference; all later uses of this name then continue to succeed in referring to the same object by virtue of “linkages” among speakers and receivers which ultimately connect back to the original event of naming. The major difficulty with such a view, which was intended to remedy the defects of the Description Theory, has been called the “Qua-Problem.” Roughly put, the objection is that the originary act of naming attempts to ground the reference of the name in certain perceptual features of the object being named, but this immediately smuggles in descriptive elements in the form of other categorial determinations employed to distinguish the specific object being referred to from others requiring different sorts of such determinations (hence the “qua,” since all perceptual objects are not just “perceived” but “perceived *as* one sort of thing and not as another”). In the face of the inability of Causal Theories to escape the problems they themselves pointed out in Description Theories, Direct Reference appears as a viable alternative. On this view, which emphasizes such simple demonstratives as “this” and “that” as more fundamental than names, “successful reference [allegedly] occurs without the need for any conceptual content whatsoever.” But, Dulckeit argues, the sort of devices such as ostension underlying Direct Reference fall prey to the “qua-problem” just as much as Causal Theories did, since even with immediate ostension (for instance) some sort of further cognition beyond mere pointing is necessary for one to specify or understand exactly what is being pointed at or referred to. In the end, the author argues, this entire complex discussion returns us to where we began, namely, that reference cannot, for any of the available theories, be “fixed” without description, but description itself remains always and in principle incomplete.

Underlying this entire cycle of discussion regarding reference, and the reason for its ultimate failure, so Dulckeit argues, is the set of basic assumptions that generate the problem for analytic philosophers in the first place: that such dyads “as mind and world, conceiver and ‘the given,’ perceiver and perceived, speaker and referent, etc.” are fundamental and mutually exclusive opposites. Under such assumptions, the problem of reference has not only been insoluble in fact, but will remain so in principle. Citing especially Hegel’s discussion of issues of reference in the opening moves of the *Phenomenology*, Dulckeit proceeds to show that the problem of reference can be resolved only

by abandoning these dichotomies as fundamental and adopting the Hegelian view that these alleged “opposites” prove, upon further examination, to be mediated, that is, mutually implicated with one another and dependent upon a more comprehensive standpoint even to be articulated at all. More specifically, the author argues that while Hegel’s view does not commit him to a Description Theory of names, he likewise insists on “a role for sense or meaning,” though not one that falls prey to the qua-problem precisely because he refuses to place particulars and the universals or concepts by which they are individuated, perceived, and recognized in absolute opposition. Rather, for Hegel their relation is mediated and “dialectical.”

Although the issue of reference may strike one as a somewhat restricted or technical problem, and Dulckeit admits that most analytic philosophers will not be willing to accept Hegel’s view as a satisfactory response to their concerns, she actually has a much broader point in mind which goes to the heart of the differences separating analytic philosophy and Hegel’s approach. To employ Hegel’s own terms, virtually all analytic philosophy has been pursued within the confines of what he, following Kant, called the understanding, roughly, an approach to philosophical issues that assumes certain oppositions as fundamental and then seeks, inevitably unsuccessfully, to resolve problems generated within these fixed oppositions. To follow Hegel, however, is to move from the standpoint of understanding to that of reason, that is, to come to see that no opposition is absolute or fixed but that the very statement of any opposition always positions the thinker at the next “level” beyond the given opposition, a standpoint which views the opposition itself as one mediated within a higher unity. In a way analogous to that seminal “analytic philosopher” Wittgenstein, the Hegelian gambit is also not that of “solving” philosophical problems by accepting the original terms in which they are posed and then seeking ingenious “solutions” to them, but in “dissolving” them by calling into question the allegedly fundamental character of the conceptual oppositions to which the analytic “solutions” are addressed. Dulckeit’s chapter serves as an apt and specific example of one possible structure of engagement between analytic and Hegelian philosophies.

Jim Vernon’s contribution focuses upon another issue often common to both the analytic philosophy of language and more empirical linguistics: that of the status and significance of grammar for linguistic reflection. In agreement with some of the other authors in this volume, Vernon believes that if we adopt a sufficiently broad perspective upon the totality of Hegel’s corpus, it is possible to develop a “system of language” implicit in it that can be shown to fit well with Hegel’s explicitly articulated philosophical system. As an illustration of his broader project, Vernon focuses upon points in several Hegelian texts where discussions of grammar appear. The first instance he cites is found in the introduction to the *Science of Logic* and emerges within a broader discussion regarding the fact that logic, by its very nature, must be treated in

abstraction from the content of the empirical sciences. From the point of view of “prescientific” reflective understanding, logic will always appear as a pure formalism having seemingly little bearing on the concrete contents of the empirical sciences. However, once one has immersed her/himself in these sciences and then returns to logic, logic will reveal itself “as the universal content of both the natural sciences and the world they investigate.” It is in the elucidation of this point that Hegel points to an important parallel between the study of logic and that of grammar. From the point of view of the student of grammar who is only acquainted with language as a native speaker, grammar, like logic to the reflective understanding, will appear as a relatively arbitrary set of abstract and formal classifications, formation rules, and so on. Only after the student has mastered other languages than his/her own and engaged him/herself in comparing them will she/he come to recognize and appreciate “the universal essence that enjoys substantial existence in all natural languages.” This theme of the centrality of the study of languages for genuine *Bildung* is reiterated and further developed in Hegel’s speech of 1809 on classical instruction in the *Gymnasium* (where Hegel was, at that time, serving as Rector). In the face of what Hegel views as a recent and lamentable decline in the early study of classical languages in favor of the German language and classical works in translation, Hegel attempts to justify the centrality and importance of serious study of classical languages as the very heart of scientific *Bildung*. His argument, as Vernon presents it, runs somewhat as follows. While the “content” of classical languages is the same as that of familiar modern ones, that is, “the excellence of the human spirit,” we will remain unable to grasp this fact concretely so long as the “form” that this assumes is the one that is natural and familiar to us (i.e., our own native language). Rather, this “universal content” must have “received the form of something foreign to us in order to become an object.” This is precisely what occurs in learning classical languages and reading texts in their original tongues: the student comes to view the content of his/her own mind presented in an alien and unfamiliar form and thus comes to recognize its objectivity. It is, of course, the grammatical features of classical languages that constitute these “alien forms,” so that the study of their grammars, even if it involves a significant portion of merely rote or “mechanical” learning, is essential to the learning process. But, and here is the key step of Hegel’s argument, such study ultimately reveals that the various determinations or categories of grammar are, in fact, universal and hence constitute part of the very content of the human mind or spirit that link our own to other language communities. The particular advantage of the study of ancient and dead languages lies in the fact that, in order to read and understand texts written in them, we must continually engage in the process of relating the universal grammatical structures and determinations that they employ to the particulars presented by the text, thus coming to realize both the “purity” of the universals manifested in various languages as well as the

concrete ways in which they “live” within the particular texts and features of a given language. This, however, as Hegel himself notes, is also exactly what is required for logical thinking itself, so that the study of grammar “constitutes the beginning of logical education.”

Of course, however important it may be, the study of grammar and the logical categories implicit within it constitutes only a part of a “system of language.” In addition, there are the more particular “material expressions” of language, which Vernon regards as presented in Hegel’s various works on *Geist*, most importantly the *Phenomenology* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*. Beyond this, the final moment of a “system of language” will pose the task of relating “the *Geist* and *Logic* texts to each other *on linguistic terms*” (the author’s own emphasis). This broader project that Vernon merely sketches is very intriguing, but raises the further question as to whether the third part of the project can be carried out while remaining within the scope of Hegelian philosophy or whether it will require a move beyond anything that Hegel himself provided (or could have provided) in either his philosophical or linguistic reflections. In a sense, this question as to whether a “system of language” can remain immanent to a conceptual philosophical system or whether it must necessarily transcend it leads both to later analytic critiques of systematic philosophy as well as to some of the “postmodern” stances that will be presented in the fourth section of this volume.

David Kolb’s challenging chapter directly confronts an issue that may seem to many readers to have lurked just below the surface of a number of the preceding discussions: the question of the relationship of the “higher order” conceptual categories treated by Hegel in his logical writings to the more specific, sometimes arbitrary, and continually changing structures and determinations of “natural languages.” The dilemma to be confronted, fundamental for any adequate understanding of Hegel’s broader philosophy, might be put in this way. If, on the one hand, Hegel’s logical categories are read simply as “abstractions” from the actual structures and determinations of natural languages, then the logical heart of Hegel’s system must be subject to the same arbitrariness, instability, and vicissitudes as natural language itself and hence be denied any claim to some broader “philosophical truth”; if, on the other hand, the logical determinations are viewed as somehow transcending and autonomous of natural languages, then their meaningfulness and relevance to “concrete experience” must be called into question, rendering them (perhaps) somehow philosophically valid but irrelevant to anything but abstract speculation. Clearly, Hegel himself claimed that his logic was both, in some sense, true as well as relevant for more concrete analyses, thus presenting the interpretive task to which the author devotes himself.

Kolb begins by adopting a working definition of a “language system” derived from recent analytic philosophy: “a language system is a network of normatively licensed connections among sentences.” Such connections

include those of formal logic, together with other material inferences and additional norms governing such things as reference and contextual linkages among sentences. Given such a view of natural languages, and recognizing that the linkages that constitute their “systems” alter over time, Kolb wishes to argue that “Hegel’s dialectical transitions and sequences are not the same as the (formal and material) inferential linkages in such systems, and yet Hegel’s transitions are embodied in the contingencies of those systems and their changes.” He begins by proposing the general idea that, while not all changes within language systems will necessarily affect the whole system or embody the sort of dialectical transitions employed by Hegel, “*all Hegelian transitions will involve changes in language system.*” In other words, while no strict correlation between changes in natural language systems and Hegel’s own logical transitions obtains, it is nonetheless true that the sort of transitions presented by Hegel do have their counterparts, or, better, are “embodied within,” changes in natural language systems. Although the author grants that an account of this based upon various “levels” of influence ranging from Hegel’s “high order” logical categories “down to” empirical language systems has its appeal, he rejects such accounts in favor of an alternative formulation. As he prefers to put the matter, “We don’t go *from* the Hegelian transitions *to* the language changes. We might rather say that the language system changes occur *in* the space of the Hegelian transitions” (author’s own italics). This statement he regards as according with Hegel’s own insistence that “language [is] the existence (*Dasein*) of Spirit,” not just its mere external manifestation or result. With respect to the relation of Hegel’s logical transitions to changes in empirical language systems, this means that the former must be understood as “embodied” within the much looser network of linkages and their historical contingencies constituting the latter. In particular, to speak of “embodiment” in this context means that Hegel’s logical transitions cannot be regarded as any complete explanation or determination of empirical language systems, precisely because such “embodiment” implies exactly the sort of contingencies that neither can nor need be accounted for by Hegelian logical analysis. Pursuant to this point, Kolb suggests that “the language of the logical presentation is [itself] not a single language system, but rather a sequence of transcategorical principles that can be embodied in or expanded into language systems.” This, in turn, implies that, in Hegel’s own logical texts, “we are dealing not with a single language system but with movement among many related systems.”

The author concludes his provocative and rather (on most prevailing readings) heterodox account of the status of Hegel’s own logical discourse by a frank admission that accepting this view of the relation between Hegel’s presentation of logical transitions and changes in empirical language systems renders questionable the sort of “higher historical unities” (and their periodization) characteristic of his more historical works. In a sense, this admission

represents an important concession to modern analytic philosophy's characteristic insistence on the diversity, contingency, and internal complexity of empirical "language systems." However, interpreting Hegel's logical texts in a way that accommodates such widely recognized features of natural languages may, at the same time, require Hegelian sympathizers to jettison other aspects of Hegel's philosophy that analytic philosophers have found most objectionable, especially his account of history and philosophy's role within it. One suspects that most other authors represented in this volume so far would not be willing to grant as much to the analytic tradition, that they would find the limited version of Hegel's philosophy that Kolb defends no longer recognizable as Hegel's own philosophical position. But perhaps this is, in fact, the price that must be paid if Hegel's philosophy is to remain vital and relevant to contemporary discussions about language.

4. Postmodern Perspectives on Hegel's Linguistic Views

The final group of chapters takes up, from the general perspective of Hegel's linguistic thought, what has been the primary focus of a great deal of the twentieth century's critical response to Hegel, especially that of "poststructuralist" or "postmodernist" thinkers: the question of the "*clôture*" of Hegelian philosophy. These contributions attempt to confront, on linguistic grounds, what Hegel meant in claiming some sort of "totality" or "absoluteness" for his philosophy and the degree to which later critics have been justified in rejecting Hegel's views because of this claim. Although the authors differ in both their approaches and answers to these questions, they nonetheless agree that a careful and more nuanced consideration of Hegel's own linguistic views can shed new light on what has become a standard charge leveled against Hegel.

Catherine Kellogg's contribution approaches the theme of Hegel's philosophy of language through its reception by three influential French interpreters, Kojève, Hyppolite, and Derrida. Specifically, she argues that Derrida's grammatological project can be better understood if situated in the context of the French reception of Hegel in the twentieth century. She begins by placing Derrida's reading of Hegel within the context of two other influential interpreters of Hegel, Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite, in their attempts to understand the crucial transition from sensory perception to conceptual thought. These figures both formulate the problem of this transition in terms of the role of the sign. Their discussions of Hegel's insights about the sign as always a primary representation of Spirit allow us to see the main issues of Derrida's own project in a different light. If the sign and its referent always stand in a dialectical relation, then, for Hegel, the sign does not refer to some "thing-in-itself"; rather, it both destroys and preserves the referent, thus creating a system of signification where, allegedly, nothing meaningful is left out. However, against such earlier readings, Derrida's approach to Hegel attempts

to show that the sign leaves behind an unassimilable “remainder,” which means that neither knowledge nor representation can be “absolute” in the sense Hegel claimed.

In his early essay “The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel’s Semiology,” Derrida formulates his approach in terms of images Hegel himself employed. The movement between the “pit,” where the remains of signification are buried, and the “pyramid,” erected by the regime of the sign, is circular: the image of the thing-in-itself that lies in the human unconscious functions as if it were the “thing itself” of signification. Derrida then attempts to show that since the remainder Hegel tries to dispose of is both a precondition for thought and that which eludes conceptual thinking, his philosophical system cannot, in principle, be “closed,” thus rendering any form of absolute representation or knowledge impossible. Kellogg suggests that Hegel’s accomplishment of pointing toward, if not himself affirming, the impossibility of absolute representation or knowledge was the main focus of the French Hegelian Renaissance in the twentieth century. In particular, she suggests that Derrida’s grammatological project recapitulates, though critically, Hegel’s attempts to explain the movement between the “pit” and the “pyramid.” On her view, Derrida’s own approach is designed to show that the retracing of this circular movement demonstrates that the Hegelian system relies upon a non-totalizable and interminable difference that cannot be interiorized by that system, thus undermining the “absolutism” of knowledge as claimed by Hegel himself.

Rather than focusing upon anti-Hegelian critiques that assume the “*clôture*” of Hegel’s philosophy, Claire May attempts to show how this accusation might itself be contested by suggesting how Hegel’s notion of negativity can be used in order to construct a nontotalizing theory of language. May chooses the example of Julia Kristeva’s ambivalent stand on the meaning and significance of Hegel’s own theory of language to make her case, arguing that Kristeva’s reading of Hegel brings into focus the radical implications of Hegel’s own views on language. The chapter opens with a presentation of Kristeva’s view of poetic language as an interplay of two modalities of the signifying process: the semiotic and the symbolic. Kristeva describes symbolic signification in terms of patriarchy, social constraints, fixity of rules, and univalent signification. By contrast, she points to the copresence of semiotic signification as enigmatic, feminine, and continually disturbing the stasis of the symbolic. This semiotic disruption of the stability of the symbolic is, according to Kristeva, made possible through a sort of negativity that ensures the continuing transformation of the speaking subject and the social system. May notes that Kristeva’s position on negativity is somewhat ambivalent: on the one hand, Kristeva rejects Hegel’s negativity as a “dead end,” but on the other hand, she admits that it facilitates the movement of the dialectic that disrupts all attempts to reify the status quo.

A closer look at Hegel's view of negativity, May argues, will explain Kristeva's ambivalence and will also help us to see the radical nature of Hegel's theory of language that Kristeva's analysis brings to the fore. If Hegel's negativity is to be placed, as suggested by Jean Hyppolite, within language, then we can see how Hegel's dialectic of poetic language and the language of the analytic understanding resembles Kristeva's dialectic of the semiotic and the symbolic. Like Kristeva's symbolic, Hegel's language of the understanding seeks stability and fixity for its meanings; and like her analysis of the semiotic, Hegel's view of poetic language is likewise appreciative of its capacity to be multivalent, polysemic, and dynamic. Although admitting that Kristeva's views are not conceptually identical to those of Hegel, May draws several interesting parallels between the two. She points out that, like Kristeva's view of the semiotic, Hegel sometimes associates negativity with femininity. If this gendering of some of Hegel's most fundamental concepts is to be taken seriously, then, May suggests, we might see some surprising links between Hegel and Kristeva. Hegel's view that all language is in a state of unrest might suggest that Kristeva's discussion of negativity is indebted to Hegel in more ways than she wants to admit. In particular, the negativity implicit in language will continually disrupt all attempts to stabilize and fix meanings and thus will allow for the sort of difference that characterizes a "revolution in and through the language of philosophy."

Katrin Pahl's contribution to this volume approaches Hegel's discussion of language in terms of his intriguing observations concerning the speculative logic of philosophical discourse as presented in the preface to the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Pahl proposes to show that Hegel's philosophical language combines elements of the traditional logic of discourse and the new Hegelian logic of the speculative. This combination, however, is in itself important as an example of the "rhythmical" interaction she wishes to explore. In particular, Pahl argues that Hegel's reformulation of the traditional logical notions of concept and judgment leads him to emphasize their materiality rather than (or in counterbalance to) the ideality often ascribed to them. In Hegel's understanding of the Concept, the fixed distinction between logic and reality becomes dynamic and thus Concept, in a sense, produces its own reality. Judgment also ceases to have an abstract logical form and can now, just as well, assume the form of a living body. This emphasis on the Concept's materiality (as opposed to an understanding of the Concept as a metaphysical abstraction) suggests a radically different understanding of Hegel's philosophy, one that views it as open to alterity. The emphasis upon the materiality of language that occurs, for example, in Hegel's consideration poetic writing points toward what Pahl describes as the "dance" of the Concept. If language, thought, and reality are mutually intertwined, then language is, for Hegel, only one form in which the Concept manifests itself. The "speculative proposition" (introduced in the preface to the *Phenomenology*), read as highlighting this "intertwining,"

must then be taken as actively undermining the traditional form of philosophical writing. In particular, if, as Pahl suggests, Hegel expands the traditional understanding of judgment to include the material manifestations of the judgment, then his idea of the speculative proposition will also call into question the traditionally hierarchized ways of understanding subject and predicate, meaning and body, and identity and difference.

In the end, on Pahl's reading, the speculative proposition provides the grounds for the possibility of what she calls an "ethical relation to (Hegelian) philosophy's other." Although it may be difficult to determine what a particular speculative proposition actually looks like, it is more to the point to regard it as Hegel's phrase for indicating a new way of reading "judgment," one that refuses to reduce it to a single univocal meaning. Pahl argues that this implies a new type of "speculative reading" that is practiced and exemplified by Hegel in the *Phenomenology*, and one that also demands a correspondingly "speculative" effort of the reader. Hegel seduces his reader into reading his propositions speculatively by integrating the traditional form and logic of the judgment into his writing while insisting on its inadequacy for his speculative philosophy. In this way, according to Pahl, Hegel develops his philosophy as an open system, "susceptible to its others." In Hegel's hands, traditional logical argumentation forfeits its own foundations and, as Pahl put it, must either fall or begin to dance. In the process of her discussion, Pahl demonstrates from various textual examples how Hegel's deployment of speculative writing and reading increases the complexity of traditional logical language and "breaks the linearity of logos."

The direction that Hegel scholarship will take from here remains to be seen. What is clear from the chapters of this volume is that the problem of language must henceforth occupy a central place in any further attempts to interpret, defend, elaborate, or critique Hegel's philosophical accomplishment. Given the relative neglect of this theme up until now, this in itself represents a milestone in the still unfolding history of scholarship devoted to Hegel and German Idealism.

NOTES

1. For a synoptic discussion of German Idealist thought about language, together with citations to some of the more important secondary sources, see Jere P. Surber, "The Problem of Language in German Idealism: An Historical and Conceptual Overview," in *Phenomenology on Kant, German Idealism, Hermeneutics and Logic*, ed. O. K. Wiegand et al. (The Netherlands: Kluwer, 2000), pp. 305–36. (Henceforth I will cite this essay as *PL*.)

2. My *Language and German Idealism: Fichte's Linguistic Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1996) (henceforth *LGI*) and *Metacritique: The Linguistic*

Assault on German Idealism (New York: Humanity, 2001) (henceforth *MC*) both discuss in detail many of these historical developments and themes, as well as provide translations of key texts and citations to the secondary literature on these and related topics. I refer the reader to the bibliographical sections of these works, as well as the essay cited above, rather than attempting to provide such detailed documentation within the scope of this introductory chapter.

3. Representative of the “first wave” of modern scholarship on Hegel’s linguistic views are Josef Simon, *Das Problem der Sprache bei Hegel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966); Werner Marx, *Absolute Reflexion und Sprache* (Frankfurt/M.: Klostermann, 1967); Theodor Bodammer, *Hegels Deutung der Sprache* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969); and Daniel Cook, *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973).

4. A concise overview of the empirical research and linguistic theories of this period can be found in R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967). See, in particular, chapters 6 and 7 of this work.

5. Robins, cited above, offers a brief discussion of Herder’s contributions to the linguistic thought of the period on pp. 151–53. Also see Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), not only for a detailed discussion of Herder’s contributions but also of those of others who were involved in this “Enlightenment” phase of linguistic reflection.

6. For historical background and a detailed discussion of this “metacritical movement,” as well as for translations of its key texts, see *MC*, cited above.

7. I present what I take to be Kant’s view of this issue in *PL*, pp. 313–16. However, for a somewhat different perspective, see the very extensive discussion in Jürgen Villiers, *Kant und das Problem der Sprache: Die historischen und systematischen Gründe für die Sprachlosigkeit der Transzendentalphilosophie* (Konstanz, 1997). This work is the most detailed to date on linguistic issues as they appear throughout Kant’s writings.

8. An elaboration of this argument and the themes presented in the following section, as well as a discussion of the philosophical problems that they pose, can be found in *PL*, especially pp. 307–12.

9. See the introduction to *MC* for a detailed account of this dispute between the Kantians and the “Metacritics.”

10. What follows is a brief synopsis of the analysis of Fichte’s essay on language in *LGI*. This volume also contains a translation of the essay as well as of other relevant materials.

11. For a more extended discussion of Schelling’s contributions to German Idealist linguistic thought, see *PL*, pp. 321–28. The most comprehensive work to date on Schelling’s linguistic thought is Jochem Hennigfeld, “Schellings Philosophie der Sprache,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 91 (1984): 16–29.

12. Several chapters in the present volume provide detailed discussions of these points from various perspectives. See also *PL*, pp. 328–36.

13. The key texts of this early phase can be found in *G. W. F. Hegel, Gesammelte Werke*, hg. von der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg, 1968ff.), Bd. VI, 277–96 and Bd. VIII, 185–96. For a more extended discussion of these passages, as well as for an overview of the development of Hegel’s linguistic thought, see Thomas Sören Hoffmann, “Hegels Sprachphilosophie,” in Tilman Borsche (Hrsg.), *Klassiker der Sprachphilosophie* (München, 1995).

14. *Hegels Werke*, IX, pp. 42ff. The most extended discussion to date of Hegel's idea of the "*spekulative Satz*" is Günter Wohlfart, *Der spekulative Satz* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981). Again, several of the chapters in this volume also deal with this theme.

15. An English translation of these passages is available in *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of The Philosophical Sciences 1830), trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), pp. 210–23.

16. The importance of this passage to Hegel's overall project is well documented by several of the chapters in this volume.

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SECTION 1

Language and the Possibility of Systematic Philosophy

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CHAPTER 1

Fragmentation, Contamination, Systematicity: The Threats of Representation and the Immanence of Thought

Kevin Thompson

In what follows I would like to consider the nature of the demands that the Hegelian conception of systematicity makes of language. It is well known that, for Hegel, a body of knowledge is systematic insofar as its justification is wholly immanent. That is, the propositions and concepts that articulate this knowledge, together with the relations that obtain between them, must unfold intrinsically in such a way that they form an interdependent totality; the unity of this whole, in turn, must itself be sufficient to establish both the validity and soundness of the parts. A systematic body of knowledge is thus self-developing, self-grounding, and self-justifying. It follows then that such a system must be able to account for the conditions of its own possibility wholly and completely from within itself. Accordingly, it cannot appeal to the extrinsic, to the merely transient, in order to establish itself as a whole or to ground any moment of its totality. What then about what is perhaps the most fundamental of these conditions, the medium whereby the system itself is presented, that is, what about language? What could be more mired in the domain of the contingent, the empirical, and the singular? What could be more opposed to the unity of systematicity than the diversity of linguistic forms and types? Does not the necessity of presenting itself in language threaten then the very project of systematization? Does it not open the immanence of such a totality to the threat of infiltration by the merely historical and by the dispersion of the wholly incomplete? That is to say, does language not expose the immanence of thought to the threats of representation?

Hegel acknowledged the centrality of these questions to his project throughout his work, always carefully attending to the relation of *Vorstellung* and *Denken*. But it is in the preface to the second edition of the *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1831), a text he completed a mere week before his death, that Hegel provides what is his perhaps most extensive discussion of language and systematicity. He begins, as he had in the preface to the first edition, by noting that the philosophical science laid out in the body of the work, that is the presentation of the immanent activity of thought itself, has a fundamental historical condition. It draws, he tells us, upon the traditions of metaphysics and logic as its “necessary condition” and “presupposition”—even if these offer only at best what he calls “a lifeless heap of skeletons.”¹ Having made this concession, Hegel immediately moves, in a way he had not in the first edition, however, to identify the more fundamental condition that underlies these very traditions. He writes, “The forms of thought (*Denkformen*) are at first displayed and laid out in human *language*” (*GW* XXI, 10/31).² Hegel clearly acknowledges here that the categories of the system initially reside in the medium of sensible communication. But, the statement is surely more paradox than solution. Is it a *confession*, an admission by Hegel of a fundamental failure, that the immanent activity of thought has an extrinsic presupposition, a source beyond itself upon which it draws and by which it sustains itself? Or is it a *proclamation*, a defiant assertion of the dominance of thought over the sensuous material in which it initially arises?

This question, of course, is one of the fundamental issues that divided what came to be called the right and left wings of Hegelianism. If the statement is indeed a confession of failure, then the Hegelian system of reason remains mired in the historical particularities and contingencies of its time as the left wing always argued it must. If it is a proclamation of dominance, then the system justifies itself by rising above the realm of the everyday and the actual as the right wing consistently held it ought. What I want to argue is that, as is so often the case with respect to these divisions within the Hegelian legacy, Hegel himself had already laid out the way of passage between this Scylla and Charybdis, between the empirical and the transcendental, between materialism and idealism.

Hegel does this, I will show, in the account of language that he develops in the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*. The nerve of the argument he offers there lies in the decisive role that the activity of subjective spirit plays in the concept of memory, the highest sphere of language and the moment of passage from representation (*Vorstellung*) to thought (*Denken*). I will argue that the most complete form of memory, what Hegel calls “mechanical memorization,” brings about a subtle integration of linguistic representation and that it is not, as some have claimed, an abandonment of the referential structure of language. What Hegel shows is that language ultimately points not just to the immediate objects of intuition, representation,

or even thought, but to the activity of self-relating in otherness itself, the movement of spirit as freedom, and that thus what emerges in this moment is precisely what is lacking in intuition and representation as these stand on their own, namely the union of subjectivity and objectivity, the binding of the domain of ownness (*Seinige*) with the domain of being (*Sein*). In this union, representing is raised to thinking, the name to the thought. Systematicity thus becomes possible, on this reading, because the language it must employ, wrought through though it is with representation, is nonetheless an expression of the very activity in which subjectivity and objectivity are joined, and, as such, it is equally shot through with the categorial determinations of thought. Systematicity is thus nothing other and nothing less than a laying bare of the immanent structurality of human expression as it embodies the movement of spirit; in short, systematicity is, to employ Hyppolite's still apt phrase, the "logic of sense."³

Now, in order to appreciate the full import of this largely exegetical point the precise nature of the threat that language poses to the project of systematicity must be more carefully developed. The pivotal nature of the theory of language for the system of reason as a whole becomes evident only within this context. And it is only insofar as it can account for this condition that the system bears even the possibility of being what it requires itself to be.

This chapter is divided into three parts. I begin with an examination of the requirements that systematicity places upon language and the threat that language poses to such an enterprise (I). I then turn to the account of language Hegel offers in the *Enzyklopädie* and examine his claim that the activity of spirit expressing itself is the bond of subjectivity and objectivity (II). I conclude with a brief discussion of how well Hegel's theory is able to address the threat language poses to the project of systematization (III).

I. SYSTEMATICITY AND LANGUAGE

Throughout his work, Hegel held that the systematic organization of knowledge and its sensuous expression are intimately and inextricably intertwined: "It is in names that we *think*."⁴ The mode of presentation, for him, is not a mere shadowy portrayal of deeper abiding truth. Rather, it is itself the unfolding of the line of argument, the movement of thought. Representation is not just an empirical condition of communication, but the very medium in which and through which the activity of thinking expresses itself. So if language poses a fundamental threat to the idea of the systematic organization of knowledge, it presents what is perhaps one of the most devastating challenges to the very project of Hegelian science itself.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, systematicity was conceived, first and foremost, as a way of understanding the nature of rational justification.

The organization of knowledge under a fundamental principle was thought to hold the key to rendering a sufficient account of any specific knowledge claim. To understand just what systematization requires of language then, we need to examine the fundamental criteria that such an ordering imposes on the process of justification. From this, we can then look more carefully at the precise nature of the threat that language poses for such a project. This, in turn, will lead us to the heart of the matter at issue in Hegel's treatment of language.

A. The Strictures of Systematicity

In one of the revisions he made to the introduction in the second edition of the *Enzyklopädie* (1827), Hegel wrote: "A philosophizing *without system* cannot be scientific at all; such philosophizing expresses for itself more of a subjective disposition, its content is accordingly contingent. A content has its justification only as a moment of the whole, outside of which it is only an ungrounded presupposition or subjective certainty" (*Enz.* [1830] § 14A). The justification of a thing, whether it be a proposition, a concept, or even a state of affairs, is dependent, for Hegel, upon its being shown to be a part of a certain kind of systematic whole, and this he claims is defined by a threefold set of strictures.

The first stricture is *epistemic*. To render an account of something, to justify it, requires that it be traced back to its ground, the source from which it arose. A systematic ordering does this by joining its various elements under the governance of an indubitable and unconditional axiom, an absolute first principle (*ein erster Grundsatz*). The propositions derived from this principle are thus erected upon a secure foundation and, as a result, can themselves be said to be absolutely certain.

The second stricture is *logical*. For the infallibility of the foundation to flow to the various parts under its governance, the moments themselves must possess an inferential structure in which each is individually necessary and mutually implicatory. The transference of the certainty of the foundation to the various elements of the system is guaranteed by this essential interdependence of the parts.

The final stricture is *ontological*. A systematic account must fully capture the nature of reality itself; no other principles, and thus no other systems, must be possible; the science must be, in short, exhaustive. A systematic account accomplishes this by fully elaborating its first principle. All the parts of the totality must follow of necessity from this principle and these must be all the propositions derivable from it. There can thus be but one totality and but one system.

A genuinely rational system must therefore be absolutely grounded, internally consistent, and explanatorily exhaustive.⁵ These strictures set the conditions for a part's inclusion within a systematic whole and serve, therefore, as the standards for its justification. Accordingly, the validity and soundness of a

proposition or concept is established just insofar as it is shown to meet these "entrance conditions" of a systematic complex.

Now, for Hegel, a scientific method cannot simply be a set of procedures for investigating the fundamental structure of things; it has to be this structure itself. That is to say, for Hegel, methodology can be nothing less than the conceptual articulation of the process in and through which things come to be what they intrinsically are. This process, the development of the concept, is, of course, the activity of self-relating negativity—the generative movement that relates itself to itself in and through its own becoming other—and it forms the first principle of Hegel's thought and the heart of his monism.⁶

Meeting the strictures of systematicity requires that a proposition or state of affairs be shown, then, to be a moment within this movement, either as a point of immediacy from which it begins, a stage of its progression into that which is other, or as a concrete union forged in and through this process in its circling back upon itself. Justification is thus a matter of demonstrating a thing's proper place within the totality of what is.

But since the determinacy of each part within this sort of totality is dependent upon its relationship to the moment that precedes it as well as that which follows it, a systematic justification must not only establish just what these defining relations are, but also how each of the relata involved are stages of development of one process. To show that something is a moment of the whole then, that is, to produce a justification that will genuinely satisfy the strictures of systematicity requires both a demonstration of how a specific contradiction defines the matter at issue, and a proof that, despite its apparently ineluctable character, this contradiction is nevertheless resolved in such a way that a passage into a higher determinacy results.

With this account of the nature of systematicity in place, we can now see exactly what is required of language in the construction of such an ordering of knowledge. First, in accordance with the epistemic stricture, language must be capable of presenting an absolute fundamental principle, an unconditioned proposition, and since, for Hegel, this principle refers not to a thing but to an activity, language must be able to capture or, better, express this movement *as* a movement. Secondly, following the logical stricture, language must be able to establish necessary inferential relationships. Given that, for Hegel, this entails expressing the mutual dependence of contradictory concepts, language must be capable of stitching together the fabric of the whole it expresses with bonds that are not only necessary and contiguous, but that depict the way in which negation constitutes the determinacy of things. Finally, the ontological stricture of systematicity requires that language be able to lay bare the entirety of the rational structure of being itself. On Hegel's account, this comprehensive structure is the basic form of self-relation in and through absolute otherness, self-relating negativity. It follows then that language, for Hegel, must be able to place before us the complete categorial structure of reality. To do this

it cannot be representational in the simple sense of depicting objects or states of affairs in the world, rather it must be capable of making the generative source of the world itself manifest.

The burdens of systematicity thus weigh heavily upon the medium of its presentation.⁷ Language must be a vehicle that enables the construction of a systematic edifice, at once complete, consistent, and comprehensive. The question, of course, is not whether language is in fact already such a vehicle, but whether it can be. If language is in some essential way inadequate to this task, then it poses a fundamental threat to the enterprise of systematization. What then precisely is it about language that would make it a threat to the construction of such a system?

B. The Threats of Language

The threat that language poses is twofold: fragmentation, the essential incompleteness of language, and contamination, its essential historicity. These claims, of course, were well known to Hegel as they formed part of the constellation of problems within which his own work arose. Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis both argued that language is fundamentally fragmentary because it ultimately seeks to express that which is inexpressible,⁸ while Hamann and Herder both held language to be rooted in custom and tradition and thus to be deeply and ineluctably historical.⁹ Since we cannot here reconstitute the important history of the texts and debates concerning these issues, what I would like to do is to treat them as philosophical problematics that the project of systematicity, specifically in its Hegelian form, had to and still must confront.¹⁰ To do that, we need to isolate their core contentions.

Let us begin by noting a trait common to both. Fragmentation and contamination are both essential threats. By that I mean not merely the fact that language is often a fragmentary mode of expression, that it at times fails to do what it is intended to do, nor merely that it is a product of tradition and culture, that, for instance, different peoples have developed different systems of communication. Rather, what is essential about these threats is that incompleteness and historicity are being said to be inherent features of language itself; that is, fragmentation and contamination are endemic to the very essence of language. The threat language poses to systematicity is not then simply that of a factual constraint; it is not some merely empirical obstacle to be overcome. Rather, language is inherently fragmentary and contaminated with contingency and it is precisely as such that it throws the project of systematization into question.

Consider first fragmentation. Schlegel and Novalis's famous commitment in their early works to the fragment as the most adequate form of literary expression was rooted in a deeply philosophical theory. They both held that language is always ultimately striving to present the idea of unity or totality, and

yet, following Kant, as ideas these concepts can have no intuitive givenness; neither complete unity, nor an absolute totality can be experienced. Thus they cannot be expressed in language either. A fragment then is not a piece detached from a larger whole, but rather the embodiment of the structure of language as such. Fragmentary presentation is a depiction of the essential structure of language as it strives to express that which is inexpressible, the ineffable idea of totality. Language is thus inherently and necessarily incomplete.

Contamination is likewise an eidetic claim. Hamann and Herder bitterly debated whether language was of divine or of human origination, but they nonetheless agreed about its function. Language, they held, is a means of communication that operates precisely because it is the repository of the cultural traditions and verbal customs of the peoples that make use of it. Language is not simply mired in the specificity of its time and place; it is defined by it. Usage just is what language is and the conventions by which it functions are historical through and through. Grammar then is an ineluctable web of empirically bound associations.

Now if these claims were to prove to be true, language would indeed pose a fundamental and devastating threat to the project of systematization. For if the medium of expression is essentially incapable of representing that which it seeks to depict, and if it is held together through wholly contingent historically constructed relations, then it cannot be employed to erect the kind of comprehensive, internally consistent, and absolutely grounded whole that systematicity requires. Systematization is nothing other than the production of an immanently unfolding body of concepts that, by virtue of the necessity of its interdependencies, forms an exhaustive and absolute account of being. If the form of language is just a set of merely empirical associations, and if its content is necessarily fragmentary, then both the logical and ontological strictures of systematization could not be fulfilled. And if these could not, then surely the epistemic demand of an absolutely certain ground would have to go unsatisfied as well. Fragmentation and contamination thus strike at the very heart of the project of systematization. For it is only insofar as Hegel's account is able to respond to these issues that his claim to systematic philosophy, and thus to philosophical justification, becomes viable. Nothing less, then, than the Hegelian project itself is at stake here.

II. REPRESENTATION AND THOUGHT

Now obviously in order to refute these threats, Hegel must establish that language is neither inherently fragmentary nor essentially contaminated, and, more positively, that its very nature enables it to be the fundamental fabric out of which a whole conforming to the strictures of systematicity is able to be woven. Hegel's decisive insight here is to recognize that the threats have a

common root: representation. Both threats take language to be exhaustively defined by its referential structure. For fragmentation, this structure essentially fails to be adequate to model the idea of totality, the transcendent; for contamination, language is saturated by its referential content: history, tradition, and convention, the empirical. Hegel's strategy is *not* to reject this conception *tout court*, but rather to show that it is itself dependent upon a deeper stratum, a more basic movement. The key to Hegel's position is his claim that the representational content of language is insufficient to bind words together into meaningful wholes. Given that the communicative facility of language requires such unities, language is dependent upon the unique work of fixing and retaining names in series that is performed by Spirit itself. In this sense, the ground of representation is nothing other than the ordering wrought by a seemingly mindless process of linguistic repetition.¹¹ Hegel argues for this view in the account of memory in the *Enzyklopädie*, and more specifically, in his analysis of the function of mechanical memorization. Despite its cursory nature, then, this discussion forms the core of Hegel's theory of language.¹² Now, since the passages in question here have been the source of much dispute, I want to begin by briefly reconstituting the context of Hegel's account before turning to an examination of the central matters of contention.

The discussion of memory is located at an especially important juncture in the *Philosophy of Spirit*. The concern at this stage of the *Enzyklopädie* is with the movement of revelation that is Spirit as it finds itself confronted by a world, a world necessarily presupposed, not made by itself; this is the domain of what Hegel calls "Subjective Spirit." Initially here, Spirit is understood to be itself a merely natural entity, a soul (Anthropology), then, in the form of consciousness, as standing in explicit awareness and relation to the natural world as an object (Phenomenology), and finally as a subject (Psychology). The significance of this progression, Hegel tells us, is that now, in Psychology, the fundamental form ("infinite form," *Enz.* [1830] § 440) of the activity of Spirit, its relating to itself in and through otherness, what Hegel calls its freedom, has become explicit. It is no longer itself simply mired within the natural realm, nor is it bound to the contents of the natural world for its object. Rather, Spirit here relates itself only to its own determinations; it stands self-related, formally free. The task of the Psychology, then, is to understand the conceptual structures whereby this formal freedom, the self-relating activity that Hegel terms "elevation (*erheben*)," is able to become fully free, that is, free not just structurally, but concretely, such that it is aware of itself and in control of itself (*bei sich*) in and through the objects it encounters and with which it interacts.¹³

The point of departure for this project, Hegel argues, lies in the recognition that Spirit as subject is defined by a fundamental contradiction. Even though Spirit is here self-related, it still always begins its activity of manifesting itself with that which it encounters, the immediately existent. Its defining

struggle is thus to take up that which lies before it, being, and posit it as its own, as ideal. The movement of Spirit is genuinely rational and it therefore becomes truly free, Hegel claims, to the extent that the object(s) with which it involves itself are, at once, wholly and fully existent and wholly and fully its own. In other words, Spirit will be genuinely free only when it brings about the union of *Seienden* and *Seinige*.¹⁴ This requires a twofold movement: the positing of what is as one's own (Theoretical Spirit) and the positing of this as wholly existent (Practical Spirit). Our concern here will be with the progression of Theoretical Spirit. It is thus important to note that this basic problematic, the uniting of the objectivity of being with the subjectivity of ideality, is what is at issue in the account of memory and thus of language. Hegel draws our attention precisely to this point when he notes that the crucial concepts in the analysis of Theoretical Spirit, as it attempts to posit the real as ideal, are its production *within* of an "ideal world (*ideelle Welt*)," the domain of the mind, and its production *without* of the "word (*Wort*)," language (*Enz.* [1830] § 444). Hegel's account is thus governed by one basic problematic: How does language bring about this union of being and ideality?

Psychology, for Hegel, investigates the capacities and activities of Spirit as it endeavors to do precisely this. It begins with the most basic form of subjective activity, the intuiting of empirical objects, and sets forth the way in which the object of this form of encountering, a spatially and temporally locatable intuition, is taken up in the processes of representation and interiorized such that the particularities of the object are transformed into universalities of meaning, what Hegel calls "thoughts (*Gedanken*)." Hegel refers to these processes as recollection (*Erinnerung*), imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), and memory (*Gedächtnis*). In them, an intuition is taken up and stored within the space and temporal flow of subjectivity, what Hegel here refers to as the intelligence (*Intelligenz*), thereby transforming the intuition into an image (*Bild*). The image is then submitted to a series of operations that compare and contrast it with other images that are similar to it in various ways. This process raises the image out of the specificity of its origin in the empirical, abstracting it to such an extent that it is ultimately able to function as a marker, a sign (*Zeichen*), capable now of designating any referent whatsoever. It is at this point, Hegel argues, that language arises within the system neither as an empirical faculty nor as a cultural artifact, but as a properly scientific concept (*Enz.* [1830] § 459A).¹⁵

Now though we cannot go into the complexities of this transition, we should note that what is at stake here is a profound transformation in how the identity of the object undergoing these operations is understood. In recollection, the image is defined in terms of resemblance. It serves as a vehicle for recognizing and recalling things because it possesses features that resemble the empirical object(s) to which it refers. But as a result of the comparative and contrastive processes of imagination, an image is able to function as a

symbol of a general concept. Nonetheless, it is still able to do so by virtue of its resemblance to the concept in question. Hegel's favorite example, of course, was the way in which any particular piece of fruit—an apple, a peach, or a pear—can serve as the symbol of the concept of fruit itself.

This is fundamentally changed in the move, within the processes of imagination, from the image as symbol to the image as sign. As a sign, the image is able to pick out any referent at all because its identity is now defined in terms of its representation of this referent, rather than its own specific attributes. In this moment, the image becomes so removed from the particularities of its origin that it is able to function as an indicator of another image, another sign, a meaning. And, in essence, this is precisely what language initially is, for Hegel, a system of signs whose identities are determined by their indicative function, rather than the substance of their content: "The intuition, as immediately something given and spatial, acquires, insofar as it is used as a sign, the essential determination of existing only as sublated" (*Enz.* [1830] § 459). Thus, by raising the intuition to the sign, the positing of the real as the ideal enters a decisive phase and, as such, an important step is taken in establishing the concrete freedom of Spirit itself.

Now it is well known that, according to Hegel, the spoken sound, the living tone, rather than the written word best fulfills this function of representation.¹⁶ However, as important as this claim is to Hegel's analysis, the real centerpiece of the theory of language lies in the account of memory. The move from imagination to memory is necessary, Hegel notes, because neither the spoken nor the written word can persist beyond its initial utterance or beyond the time of the community that is able to decipher its distinctive markings. As it stands, the signs of language, what Hegel calls names, are still *ultimately* intuitions and, as such, still tied to the merely empirical. Consequently, they are themselves inherently "transient" and their relation to the meaning that they signify is wholly contingent or, as Hegel says, "external" (*Enz.* [1830] § 460). This real material has thus *not yet* been adequately raised and posited as the ideality that it must be in order for Spirit to be genuinely free in and through it.

The processes of memory—retentive (*behaltende*, § 461), reproductive (*reproduzierende*, § 462), and mechanical (*mechanisch*, § 463)—address precisely this problem. In retentive memory, intelligence performs the same comparative and contrastive operations as it had upon the intuition as image now upon the intuition as sign, together with its signifying relation. In doing so, both are taken up in their essential relationality and the empirical nature of the sign and the contingent connection of it with its meaning is negated. This transforms their merely inductive association into a universal, enduring connection and the sign itself, the sound or mark, becomes a representation, a mental imprint. The result is that both now form one whole, "one representation" (*Enz.* [1830] § 461), and both are now under the governance of the ideal

world of the mental. Their source of validity is thus no longer intuition but the “*realm of representation*” itself (*Enz.* [1830] § 462).

In reproductive memory, then, to have the name is to have the thing, the matter itself (*die Sache*). To use Hegel’s famous example, “lion” is an “image-less simple representation” that, by virtue of its union of sound and meaning, enables one to dispense with the intuition of such an animal as well as even its image (*Enz.* [1830] § 462A). The name suffices and, as a result, by employing names alone, we are able to understand and think without having to have recourse to empirical intuition or even to recollection: “It is in names that we *think*” (*Enz.* [1830] § 462A).

But, having reached this important conclusion, Hegel introduces a turn that has disconcerted many, if not all, of his readers. From the concrete identity of name and meaning, the union of sign and signified, in reproductive memory, he appears to abandon meaning completely in favor of the mechanical recitation of senseless names. Surely, this is nothing less than a betrayal of the movement of Spirit, a forsaking of the living processes of idealization for the dead mechanics of senseless repetition. How then are we to understand what is clearly one of the most disconcerting of the system’s transitions?¹⁷

Let us return again to reproductive memory. If the union of sound and meaning in the name enables it to be just the matter itself, then, Hegel claims, the name serves as the intelligence’s externality, and in the use of names, recollecting them now *within* the domain of the mental rather than *into* it from the empirical, the intelligence posits itself, externalizes itself, within itself.¹⁸ Intelligence’s commerce with names thus seems to take place wholly within the mental sphere and thus for mechanical memory to break the relation to meaning seems clearly possible. But this would render names merely ideal, negating their sensuous existence, and thus leave undone the union of existence and ideality to which Theoretical Spirit is dedicated. The key to understanding the transition must thus lie in seeing how it actually brings about this unity.

The decisive moment, I believe, is the movement from the multiplicity of signs that exist within the sphere of representation, the domain of the mental, to the ordering activity of subjectivity, what Hegel here calls the mechanism of the “empty *bond*” (*Enz.* [1830] § 463).¹⁹ Recall that in retentive memory a sign and its relation to that which it signifies, its meaning, is raised, by comparison and contrast, to the level of essentiality. They are, to be sure, no longer what they had been, merely an empirical association. Yet, this elevation does not establish how various signs are to be joined with one another, that is, how they are to form the basic units of communication: phrases, clauses, sentences, and so on. Reproductive memory thus has the matter or thing when it has the name. And it thus has no need to have recourse to empirical intuition or images. Yet, these names lack an inherent way of relating themselves to one another. Reproductive memory is thus a reservoir awash in idealities without an elemental grammar, a pit of semantics without syntactical order. Hegel

refers to this condition as the problem of the “association of particular names” (*Enz.* [1830] § 462). And it is this problem that necessitates the passage from reproductive to mechanical memory.

In reproductive memory, the only way to associate names with one another, Hegel says, “lies in the meaning of the determinations of sensing, representing, and thinking intelligence as it runs through this series” (*Enz.* [1830] § 462). Thus, at this level, it is the work of reference—whether it is reference to the experiential or representational or mental—that meaningfully binds names to one another. Ideality is insufficient, on its own, to do this work. Consequently, as the externality in which intelligence “posits itself within itself” (*Enz.* [1830] § 462), the name is an ideality whose relation to other idealities is made possible by the referential structure endemic to intelligence’s encounter with objects beyond itself. At this stage then, the grammar of names is the grammar of experience (in the broadest sense).

Hegel thus begins the account of mechanical memory proper with a recognition of this seeming impasse: “In so far as it is meaning (*Bedeutung*) that sustains the connection between names, the linking of meaning with being as name (*Sein als Namen*) is *still* a synthesis and the intelligence, in this its externality, has *not* simply returned into itself” (*Enz.* [1830] § 463 [emphases added]). The order of representation, the domain of the ideal, is the true space or repository of names and, as such, it is their proper being. And this, Hegel is saying, is joined to the meanings, now the referents rather than the idealities, that hold these names together in senseful wholes by a synthesis that is, thus far at least, extrinsic to the sphere of intelligence itself, the “realm of representation.” The syntactical structure, here, is dictated by the brute immediacy of the experienceable. As a result, names are an externalization of intelligence, a way it expresses itself, in which intelligence fails to be with itself and thus return to itself in the otherness of utterance.

Yet, Hegel continues, “The intelligence, however, is the universal, the simple truth of its particular externalizations, and its completed appropriation (*Aneignen*) is the sublation (*Aufheben*) of the difference between meaning and name” (*Enz.* [1830] § 463). The essentiality of the synthesis of that which joins representations with one another, the meaning, and that which represents, the name, is here said to be taken up, and its extrinsicality negated, in the appropriative movement of intelligence. But what precisely is this appropriative movement endemic to intelligence? It is nothing other than the fixing of names into series and the holding of them in such stable complexes, which is to say, it is the process, “devoid of understanding” (*Enz.* [1830] § 463A), of senseless memorization.

Memory is mechanical, for Hegel, when it is a synthetic operation that sets names in place and holds them together without regard to their representational content.²⁰ It is the capacity of the mind to become a pure functioning machine, intelligence’s ironically mindless ability to set names in series, to repeat them

devoid of their content, their history, their sense. It is, in other words, the activity of ordering as such.²¹ But how does this process bring about the “sublation of the difference between meaning and name,” of the real and the ideal?

Recall that, in reproductive memory, the only way to link names with one another is by virtue of the real states of affairs that they designate. But if the ligaments of language were fully determined by the joints of the real, then language would be exhaustively defined by its referential structure, and the transition to the pure movement of thought thwarted. But the real is not what ultimately binds names to one another. It is the intelligence itself that effects this seemingly trivial, but obviously now, all important task. Operating as a kind of pure machine, producing order without utility or finality, the intelligence rivets names together in accord with patterns endemic to itself. The capacity of the mind to do this—to establish series of terms without concern for what they are to depict—shows, Hegel argues, that the ultimate referent, the ultimate meaning, of names resides neither in the mere interiority of their ideality, nor in the exteriority of their representational content, but in the simple movement of joining, ordering, and retaining, the capacity of Spirit he refers to as the “empty bond (*das leere Band*)” (*Enz.* [1830] § 463). Intelligence thus proves to be the ultimate being of both the ideality of names and the reality of meaning. However, it does so not as a mere repository of signs, but as the activity, the movement, of synthesis itself. Hegel thus concludes that this form of memorization is properly called mechanical in a twofold sense: on the one hand, because the unities it produces are not determined by the nature of the names arranged, they are “juxtaposed to one another,” hence they relate mechanically rather than organically, and, on the other, because by this process memory proves itself to be a distinctly “subjective externality” (*Enz.* [1830] § 463), an objective worldly operation of the mind.

Mechanical memorization thus demonstrates that Spirit is the ultimate reference for all names. This entails that Spirit is something more than merely formally free. It posits itself instead as concretely self-determining, self-related in and through otherness. As the empty synthetic bond holding all things together, it makes itself being, and thereby unites ideality, what is its own, with that which is, being. Hegel summarizes this trajectory in an extremely dense but important passage:

Spirit is only *with itself* (*bei sich*) as the *unity* of *subjectivity* and *objectivity*. Here in memory, after being initially external in intuition, and thus [merely] *finding* determinations, and in representation recollecting *these findings* in itself and making them its own (*Seinigen*), it made itself, as memory, into an externality in itself, so that what is its own appears as something continually found (*ein Gefunden-werdendes*). (*Enz.* [1830] § 463A)

In intuition, Spirit merely discovered the preexistent attributes of empirical objects. In representation, it raised these into images, signs, and finally

names. In memory, it raised names themselves into the domain of ideality, making them its own. But in mechanical memory, Spirit, in the form of intelligence, showed itself to be the living source of these determinations. In this moment, then, intuition, images, signs, and names, the world of the ideal, is joined with being, the existent; what is Spirit's own, the ideal, appears as something constantly being found, the existent. In mechanical memory then, being and ideality are one and Spirit is with itself, with its own, in and through that which is other than it, existence.

Mechanical memory marks, then, the transition to thought as the complete unity of subjectivity and objectivity, and, in this union, Hegel does indeed conclude there is "no more *meaning*" (*Enz.* § 464). But that is because Spirit itself is both the ultimate meaning, the ultimate referent, for all names, as well as the ultimate objectivity of all things. Thus, to say that there is no more meaning in thought is *not* to deny that thinking and its object, thoughts, are representational, rather it is to recognize that they articulate the fundamental working of Spirit itself, the generative movement of being. In doing this, thoughts do not refer as names do to something beyond themselves, but instead to the very activity that is at the heart of both being and thought.

III. THOUGHT AND SYSTEMATICITY

Let us now return to the tasks laid out above. Hegel, we said, had to show that language is not inherently fragmentary, nor essentially contaminated. The question at the root of these threats is whether or not language is exhausted by its representational intent. The account in the *Enzyklopädie* clearly gives us the core of Hegel's response to this profound problem. It shows that a third element must enter into the equation, one requiring that the exclusionary terms in which the question is posed be rethought. That third element is nothing other than the ordering activity of intelligence itself, the "empty bond." It is this movement—seemingly insignificant because it is devoid of any semantic content, yet profound in its binding terms together—that makes representation possible. Mechanical memorization thus does not abolish representation; it integrates it within the movement of Spirit itself. Language therefore expresses not only specific representational content, but also, more deeply, the generative movement of revelation itself. It is, we can now say, at one and the same time, suffused with representation, a semantics of the experienceable, and equally shot through with the elemental grammar of thought, a syntactics of Spirit.

Language, then, is neither essentially contaminated, nor inherently fragmentary. The representational structure of language often fails, and its content certainly reflects the historical and cultural contexts within which it arises. Yet, it is, simultaneously, the activity of freedom, the movement of Spirit. The

grammar that binds language together is thus not a mire of contingent associations, but the relations of this movement. And language is not defined by a failure to present the ineffable, but by this movement's self-relating wholeness. Language, then, indeed is capable of being the fabric out of which a systematic whole can be woven for it is stitched together by the categorial structures of Spirit. And, as such, erecting a totality that conforms to the strictures of systematicity (epistemic, logical, and ontological) is to do nothing less, but nothing more, than to grasp the rationality already inherent in the actuality of speech.

The passage from the preface to the second edition of the *Wissenschaft der Logik* with which we began—"the forms of thought are at first displayed and laid out in human *language*"—concludes:

Nowadays we cannot be reminded often enough that it is thought (*Denken*) that differentiates humans from beasts. In everything that becomes something inner, that becomes representation (*Vorstellung*) in general, what humans make their own (*Seinigen*), language has itself intervened, and what we make into language and express in it contains—shrouded, mixed, or worked out—a category, so much is logic natural for us, or rather, so much is logic our unique *nature* itself. (*GWXXI*, 10/31–32)

The categorial structure of being lies latent in the medium whereby we communicate with one another. In joining name to name, we are not just expressing the generative movement of Spirit itself, we are this movement itself. The forms of thought that serve as the conceptual building blocks for the system are thus always already at work in the actuality of human expression. Language, then, is the means by which we make the matters we discuss our own, and at the same time, forge a union of being and ideality. Hegel's theory of language thus marks a way of passage beyond the threats of representation to the immanence of thought. In so doing, it shows the system of philosophical science to be the laying bare of the immanent structurality of language, the logic of sense.

NOTES

1. Hegel, G. W. F., 1832, *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Teil. Die Objektive Logik. Erster Band. Die Lehre vom Sein*, ed. Friedrich Hogemann and Walter Jaeschke, *Gesammelte Werke*. Bd. 21 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1985), p. 10. *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1969), p. 31. All further references to this work are included in the text designated as *GWXXI* followed by the appropriate page reference to the German edition and then to the English translation. Where necessary, I have modified the translation.

2. For a discussion of this "logical instinct" in language, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Idea of Hegel's Logic," in his *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976),

pp. 75–99, esp. 91–99. Whereas Gadamer takes the appeal to language and instinct to be an opening through which a thematization of finitude in Hegel's thought is possible, the reading offered in the present chapter seeks to mark a path more faithful to Hegel's own trajectory.

3. See Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), Part I, ch. 2, and Part III, ch. 3.

4. Hegel, G. W. F., *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Hans-Christian Lucas, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 20 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1830), § 462A. All further references to this work are included in the text designated as *Enz.* [1830] followed by the appropriate paragraph number, the designation "A" refers to Hegel's *Anmerkungen* (Remarks); when necessary, the appropriate page number has been included.

5. Vittorio Hösle, *Hegel's System. Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität*. Bd. 1 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988), pp. 12–59, provides a useful account of Hegel's concept of systematicity, as well as an analysis of its historical development.

6. For Hegel, the certainty of this principle is not, however, a matter of simple self-evidence or intellectual intuition. Hegel shows that for anything to be it must be determinate or concrete and this is possible only insofar as negation exposes the inadequacy of the immediacy from which it emerges, thereby revealing the indeterminacy of this beginning in relation to that which is other or opposed to it, then, turning back upon itself and thus operating in a self-referential manner, it unites in mutual dependence that which is opposed, such that a more concrete and higher form of the immediacy with which it initially began results. In short, Hegel shows the determinacy by which all things are what they are to be the result of a singular movement of self-relating negativity.

For a discussion of this point, see Dieter Henrich, "Die Formationsbedingungen der Dialektik: Über die Untrennbarkeit der Methode Hegels von Hegels System," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* (1982): 139–62.

7. For useful guides to the issues involved in the relationship between language and systematicity in Hegel, see Josef Derbolav, "Hegel und die Sprache: Ein Beitrag zur Standortbestimmung der Sprachphilosophie im Systemdenken des Deutschen Idealismus," in *Sprache. Schlüssel zur Welt*, ed. Helmut Gipper (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1959), pp. 56–86; and Josef Simon, *Das Problem der Sprache bei Hegel* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1966), pp. 170–75.

8. The principal texts where this critique by Schlegel and Novalis is set forth are the collections of fragments they published collaboratively and separately in the first edition of the journal *Athenäum* (1798), and the essay by Friedrich Schlegel entitled "On Incomprehensibility," which was published in the final edition of the journal (1800).

All these writings are included in Friedrich Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I* (1796–1802), ed. Ernst Behler et al. *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Bd. 2 (Munich: Schöningh, 1958).

For English translations of the pertinent texts, see Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); and *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings*, ed. and trans. Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), Parts I & III.

9. The relevant texts from Hamann and Herder are: J. G. Hamann, *Metakritik über den Purismus der Vernunft* (composed, 1784; published, 1800), in J. G. Hamann, *Schriften zur Sprache*, ed. Josef Simon (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), pp. 135–64; and J. G. Herder, “Eine Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft” (1799), in *John Gottfr. Herder’s Sprachphilosophie*, 2d ed., ed. Erich Heintel (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1964), pp. 181–227.

English translation of this material is included in *Metacritique: The Linguistic Assault on German Idealism*, ed. and trans. Jere Paul Surber (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity, 2001), Part I.

10. For treatments of this history, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); and Jere P. Surber, “German Idealism under Fire: Fichte, Hegel, and ‘Metacriticism,’” in *Hegel on the Modern World*, ed. Ardis Collins (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 93–109; and O. K. Wiegand et al., ed., “The Problems of Language in German Idealism: An Historical and Conceptual Overview,” in *Phenomenology on Kant, German Idealism, Hermeneutics and Logic* (The Hague: Kluwer, 2000), pp. 305–36.

11. On this reading, Hegel’s theory of language is not primarily a theory of words, or of names, but of sentences. In this sense, the *Enzyklopädie* account can be seen as expanding upon the central insights Hegel developed concerning the “speculative proposition.”

On this earlier theory, see Jere Paul Surber, “Hegel’s Speculative Sentence,” in *Hegel-Studien* 10 (1975): 211–30; and Günter Wohlfart, *Der speculative Satz: Bemerkungen zum Begriff der Spekulation bei Hegel* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981).

12. It has become rather commonplace to dismiss Hegel’s discussion in the *Enzyklopädie* because of its brevity. For a recent example, see Karin de Boer, “The Infinite Movement of Self-Conception and Its Inconceivable Finitude: Hegel on *Logos* and Language,” *Dialogue* 40 (2001): 75–97, esp. 76–77.

Surber largely dismisses the account not because of its brevity, but because he believes it fails to address the Metacritical challenge (“German Idealism under Fire,” 106). As I hope to show in what follows, the *Enzyklopädie* account does indeed respond to this challenge, what I have called the threat of contamination, though it does not do so by name.

13. On the role of the Psychology within the System, see the excellent commentary by Adriaan Peperzak, *Selbsterkenntnis des Absoluten: Grundlinien der Hegelschen Philosophie des Geistes* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1987), pp. 38–57. For a discussion of the specific mental faculties involved, see Willem A. deVries, *Hegel’s Theory of Mental Activity: An Introduction to Theoretical Spirit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

14. Cf. *Enz.* [1830] § 443.

15. For a much more extensive analysis of this line of argument, see Theodor Bodammer, *Hegels Deutung der Sprache: Interpretationen zu Hegels Äußerungen über die Sprache* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1969), pp. 23–67.

16. See Jacques Derrida, “The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel’s Semiology,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 69–108.

For useful discussions of this piece, see David Farrell Krell, *Of Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing: On the Verge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), chap. 5; and José Maria Ripalda, "Die Sprache spricht nicht aus: Bemerkungen zu Hegels Sprachphilosophie," *Hegel-Studien* 34 (1999): 39–59.

17. This difficult passage has been the subject of an extremely rich set of discussions. One of the most important holds that Hegel employs two fundamentally distinct conceptions of names: ones that have been rendered senseless by means of purely mechanical memorization ("names as such"), and ones that retain their full representational content ("representational names"). The former is said to be the material for what Hegel calls the "language of the Concept," while the latter is the basis for the "language of the Understanding." As insightful as this approach is, however, I do not believe the text supports this reading.

For the best defense of this interpretation, see John McCumber, *The Company of Words: Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), esp. Part III, ch. 7, and Part IV, ch. 10.

18. Cf. *Enz.* [1830] § 462.

19. Justification for this approach is provided by an examination of the revisions the passages on mechanical memory underwent in the three editions of the *Enzyklopädie*.

In the 1817 edition Hegel moves directly from the recognition of the merely associative character of words in reproductive memory, what he calls the "multiplicity of signs," to the fixing and ordering work of the empty bond of mechanical memory:

There is a general *multiplicity* of signs, and as such they are absolutely contingent juxtaposed to one another. The empty bond (*das leere Band*), which fixes such series and retains them in this stable order, is the completely abstract, pure power of subjectivity—the memory, the whole externality in which the members of such series are juxtaposed to one another, is called *mechanical*. (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* [1817], ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Klaus Grotzsch, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 13 [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000], § 382)

In 1827, Hegel introduces a decisive transition into this movement by appealing to the concept of name as the externalization of intelligence and to intelligence as the being or space of now senseless names:

The name, as the content's *existence* within intelligence, is the *externality* of the intelligence itself within existence; the recollection of the name as the intuition brought forth from intelligence is at the same time the externalization in which theoretical spirit posits itself within itself. It is thus *being*, a *space* of names as such, i.e., of senseless (*sinnloser*) words. There is a general multiplicity of names, and as such in so far as they are contingent juxtaposed to one another, there is nothing here but the ego and this multiplicity of words. But the ego is not only the universal *being* or their general space, but as subjectivity, it is their power, the empty *bond* (*das leere Band*), which fixes series of them within itself and retains them in a stable order. In so far as they merely are, and the intelligence itself is here, in itself, only as being, it is the power of the wholly abstract subjectivity,—3) the memory, which, as the

whole externality in which the members of such series are juxtaposed to one another and is this externality itself, is called *mechanical*. (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* [1827], ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Hans-Christian Lucas, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 19 [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998], § 463)

In the revisions for the final 1830 edition, Hegel seeks to clarify the transition he had introduced in 1827 by adding another reference to the problem of the association of names after the concept of names, thereby showing that this is the guiding problem throughout and the issue to which the various other terms in the passage must be referenced:

In so far as it is meaning (*Bedeutung*) that sustains the connection between names, the linking of meaning with being as name is still a synthesis and the intelligence, in this its externality, has not simply returned into itself. The intelligence, however, is the universal, the simple truth of its particular externalizations, and its completed appropriation (*Aneignen*) is the sublation (*Aufheben*) of the difference between the meaning and the names. This highest recollection of representation is the highest externalization, in which it posits itself as being, the universal space of names as such, i.e., as senseless (*sinnloser*) words. The ego, which is this abstract being, is, as subjectivity, at the same time the power of the various names, the empty bond (*das leere Band*), which fixes series of them within itself and retains them in a stable order. In so far as they merely are, and intelligence is itself here their being, intelligence is this power as the wholly abstract subjectivity—the memory, which, on account of the whole externality in which the members of such series are juxtaposed to one another, and though it is itself this subjective externality, is called *mechanical* (§ 195). (*Enz.* [1830], § 463)

See also the student transcriptions from the Philosophy of Spirit lecture course of 1827/1828 where Hegel is reported to have remarked about the “complex of words,” the “bond of representations,” and the “bond of names,” and how these are forged in and through mechanical memory. Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes. Berlin 1827/1828*, ed. Franz Hespe and Burkhard Tuschling. *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Bd. 13 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994), pp. 219–22.

According to the student transcriptions from the lecture course on the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1827/1828, Hegel remarked, when describing mechanical memory, that “We call something mechanical where several things stand in relation to one another, holding themselves, but in this relation, at the same time, remaining externally juxtaposed to one another.” G. W. F. Hegel. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes: Berlin 1827/1828*, 219.

20. On this point, see Stephen Houlgate, “Hegel, Derrida, and Restricted Economy: The Case of Mechanical Memory,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34 (1996): 79–94.

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CHAPTER 2

Language and Metaphysics: The Dialectics of Hegel's Speculative Proposition

Chong-Fuk Lau

I. FINITUDE OF LANGUAGE AND HEGEL'S CONCEPT OF SPECULATION

In any case, the form of the proposition, or more precisely that of the judgment, is incapable of expressing what is concrete (and what is true is concrete) and speculative; because of its form, the judgment is one-sided and to that extent false.¹

At first glance, Hegel's critique of the propositional form seems to lead inevitably to a cul-de-sac, for no matter how skeptical he is about this linguistic form, he has no other choice but to develop and to present his philosophy as well as this very critique by means of it. Hegel's attitude in regard to language is, therefore, unavoidably ambivalent, as he, on the one hand, is fully conscious of the necessary reliance of our reason on the admittedly finite capacities of natural language, yet, on the other hand, also realizes the need of transcending the finitude of language, in order to apprehend the "Absolute." Nevertheless, this dilemma, when explored systematically, is itself the very clue to comprehending the subtle standpoint as well as the fundamental concerns of Hegel's "speculative" philosophy.²

The perplexing situation that Hegel is faced with corresponds, indeed, to the deep-seated problem that has already been designated by Kant as the "peculiar fate" of human reason in the opening sentence of his *Critique of Pure Reason*.³ Although in Kant's opinion human reason is inevitably troubled by questions that it can neither simply dismiss nor satisfactorily answer, he tries to settle the dilemma by showing how those metaphysical questions fully surpass

the capabilities of *finite reason*, thereby denying the possibility of attaining rational knowledge. Kant's "humble" view of philosophy is founded on his conviction regarding the finitude of human reason that it is necessarily subject to limitations as long as it *thinks*. An infinite reason like God would rather be a cognitive faculty by virtue of pure intuition alone, as it would grasp its objects directly without any mediation through concepts.⁴ "Thinking as such is thus," according to Heidegger's interpretation, "already the mark of finitude (*Siegel der Endlichkeit*)."⁵ Since Kant, the finitude of human reason has become a central philosophical issue that has then been explored by philosophers of our time more deeply than ever due to the recognition of the inevitably linguistic character of thinking.⁶ Gadamer, for instance, speaks of our unsupersedable bondage to language (*Unaufhebbarkeit unserer Sprachgebundenheit*)⁷ in this respect and maintains—probably in response to Heidegger's formulation—that language is "the record of finitude (*Spur der Endlichkeit*)."⁸

However, the philosophical movement immediately following Kant regards the admission of the finitude of human reason as a philosophical self-abasement. In favor of the pursuit of metaphysical knowledge, idealistic philosophers such as Fichte and Schelling, who share some basic motives with the stirring epoch of Romanticism, show a skeptical attitude toward language, especially in regard to the form of propositions and judgments. If there is a linguistic form in which the Absolute could find expression at all, it would be, according to the Romantics, poetry, though they would rather give preference to the "nonlinguistic" powers of the human mind like feeling or intuition, which find their expression and realization in art and religion instead of in philosophical reasoning. Schelling, for example, holds that the Absolute can neither be grasped by any concepts nor by any words of human language, but only through the "intellectual intuition," which purports to be able to apprehend the Absolute directly by circumventing our finite language.⁹

Although Hegel had once followed the philosophical position of his younger colleague Shelling, he soon came to realize that the admission of an allegedly direct access to the Absolute without the mediation of concepts is inconsistent with the scientific character (*Wissenschaftlichkeit*) of philosophy.¹⁰ Even though art and religion are, for Hegel, also specifically realized forms of reason, philosophy alone is "the highest mode of apprehending the absolute Idea, because its mode is the highest mode, the Concept."¹¹ In order to bring the Absolute under concepts, philosophy has no other choice but to rely on our finite language. By recognizing philosophy as a "strenuous effort of the Concept (*Anstrengung des Begriffs*),"¹² Hegel repudiates every attempt to introduce a nonconceptual or nonlinguistic organon into philosophy that would be free from the limitations of natural language. Indeed, the approach of Hegel's *Science of Logic* already indicates that it is not a work dealing with metaphysical problems from the so-called God's-eye view (as for God, no logic, or in reference to Kant, no "thinking" at all would ever be needed to apprehend the

Absolute), but rather from the human standpoint which, in contrast, makes every effort to allow the Absolute to be intelligible by its finite means.¹³

Without trying to get rid of the substantial dilemma by either giving up the essential quest for metaphysical knowledge or taking refuge in an esoteric power such as the “intellectual intuition,” Hegel seeks to confront the problem with its internal contradiction directly and critically. In this manner he brings the possibility of metaphysical reflection from within the bounds of the finitude of human language into question. This seemingly unsolvable dilemma, however, is a result of conceptual confusions about the way the problem should be posed. Therefore, clarifying some key concepts becomes a crucial step in Hegel’s solution—above all the concept of the so-called genuine infinity (*wahrhafte Unendlichkeit*).

For Hegel, his predecessors have made a “category mistake” by comparing the logical relation of “finitude” and “infinity” to that of “something” and “other” (*Etwas und Anderes*), which are mutually determined by means of a simple negation. On the basis of this opposition, they could only arrive at a concept of what Hegel calls the “spurious infinity (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*).” Hegel’s point is that if the infinite is defined simply as the negation or the “other” of the finite, then this *nonfinite* (*das Nicht-endliche*) itself would be one-sided and finite as well, for it is also bounded the same by its negative. Insofar as the finite and the infinite in this opposing relation merely represent two separate worlds, one on this side and the other beyond, this unattainable infinite is not, as traditional metaphysics maintains, the world of ultimate reality, but only “the indeterminate void.”¹⁴

Instead of this dogmatic conception, Hegel tries to put forward a critical or “speculative” concept of infinity, a concept which is of fundamental importance for the overall interpretation of Hegel’s speculative philosophy. Misled by the superficial meaning of the categories, the dogmatic conception is mistaken in holding the infinite *apart* from the finite. The genuine infinite, however, is not “something” beyond the finite, but the *process*¹⁵ in which the two one-sided and opposing categories, namely the finitude and the “finitized” infinity, come to be united on a higher and more comprehensive level by making plain their alternating determinations.¹⁶ Inasmuch as all the original boundaries of the one-sided categories are “sublated” as the internal and passing differentiations of this process, the new category is considered to be unbounded and hence truly infinite. Thus, the Hegelian concept of infinity is not on the same categorical level as the concept of finitude, and is not even its opposite; rather it operates as a meta-theoretical reflection on the determination and limitation of finitude.¹⁷ In this respect, true infinity—that is, the Absolute—is nothing but the *total comprehension of finitude from within finitude*.

On the other hand, the spurious and the genuine concept of infinity can also be distinguished as “the infinite of the understanding” and “the infinite of reason,”¹⁸ according to the different ways of looking at things by understanding and reason respectively.

The understanding *determines*, and holds the determinations fixed; reason is negative and *dialectical*, because it resolves the determinations of the understanding into nothing; it is positive because it generates the universal and comprehends the particular therein.¹⁹

By virtue of its determinative character, the understanding cannot avoid labeling finitude and infinity as two opposing concepts and is, from this viewpoint, never capable of comprehending the genuine concept of infinity in its fluid nature. In attempting to destroy the “finitized” concept of infinity, Hegel obviously intends to refute the philosophical position of the “*mere understanding view* (*bloße Verstandes-Ansicht*)”²⁰ as well. This “stubborn”²¹ standpoint has, according to Hegel, taken possession of philosophy since Kant, who sought to demarcate the legitimate use of pure concepts from the illegitimate use by emphasizing the distinction between understanding and reason.²² However, by sticking to this fixed distinction, reason itself is degraded to a problematic faculty of the human mind which, in attempting to transcend the finitude of understanding, always gets caught up in a web of contradictions.

For Hegel, the concept of reason put forward by Kant only represents the “understanding view” of reason,²³ which is—analogueous to the spurious concept of infinity—mistaken in regarding understanding and reason as two opposing faculties. Reason in its true essence is, more precisely stated, a mode of self-critical thinking that casts reflections on every determination made by itself as well as its object-oriented counterpart, understanding; and the way of thinking peculiar to reason is characterized by Hegel as *speculation*. In opposition to what the name may suggest, the Hegelian speculation never purports to be an “extraconceptual” power like Schelling’s intellectual intuition, for it never intends to do without thinking, and is, instead, “the thinking of thinking.”²⁴ In doing so, it relies just as much on our conceptual and linguistic powers as the understanding does. According to Gadamer, Hegel’s speculation refers to “the mirror relation (*das Verhältnis des Spiegels*)”²⁵ and deals critically with “the dogmatism of everyday experience.”²⁶ That is to say, speculation operates as a mirror reflecting our thought. Through this mirror, our thought comes to reflect upon its own presuppositions made by the understanding in the course of everyday experience. The merit of speculation is, therefore, to make transparent those finite determinations which were made by the understanding but nevertheless remained obscure to it.²⁷ For Hegel, speculative reason is essentially infinite, not by virtue of any mysterious divine power, but on the ground that it is capable of comprehending its own necessary limitations and, in this sense, of superseding its finitude.²⁸

After this conceptual clarification, the dilemma resulting from the finitude of language and the quest for the Absolute moves into a completely different light. As soon as the understanding comes to realize the one-sidedness of its perspective, it has already moved beyond its limit (*Grenze*) and begins reflecting upon itself from the meta-critical standpoint of reason.²⁹ In the

same way, although human language is bounded by its admittedly finite capacities of expression, it has nonetheless precisely this ability: to reflect upon its fundamental limitations by its own means. For this reason, Hegel characterizes language not only as “the work of the *understanding*,”³⁰ but also as “a means of designation peculiar to *Reason*.”³¹ It is exactly this essential *Janus face of language* that determines the peculiar manner of reasoning and exposition (*Darstellung*) in Hegel’s speculative philosophy—an issue that is dealt with by Hegel in his doctrine of “the speculative proposition (*der spekulative Satz*).”

II. SPECULATIVE PROPOSITION AS CRITIQUE OF PROPOSITIONAL FORM

According to traditional logic, the elementary form of proposition consists of a subject and a predicate that are joined by the copula. This subject-predicate structure has been generally regarded by traditional philosophy, and especially by Kant in connection with his theory of categories, as the primordial form of all intelligible discourse. Hegel, by criticizing the one-sidedness of the subject-predicate form, is also calling a fundamental presupposition of the traditional philosophy into question. Ever since his early writings, in which his basic concern was the quest for reconciliation by overcoming disavowance (*Entzweiung*), Hegel was confronted with the problem of how to express philosophical thoughts in the form of judgment (*Ur-teil*). This primordial form of intelligible discourse, however, fails to express the essential unity of the Concept owing to its character of original division (*ursprüngliche Teilung*).³² Critical comments on the subject-predicate form can be found in almost all of Hegel’s major works.³³ However, the passage expounding the “speculative proposition” in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* deserves special elaboration,³⁴ for Hegel attempts in this particular densely composed preface, designed originally as the “introduction” to the whole system, to give an overall account of the leitmotiv of his speculative philosophy.³⁵

According to Hegel, the basic problem in the propositional form can be attributed to the *logical asymmetry* of the subject-predicate structure. He remarks regarding this asymmetry: the pivot of a simple proposition is the “*Subject* to which the content is related as Accident and Predicate. This Subject constitutes the basis to which the content is attached, and upon which the movement runs back and forth.”³⁶ Under this conception, the grammatical subject is conceived as a thing, or more precisely, a *substance* that is both logically and ontologically independent of, and prior to, those accidents ascribed to it. However, this asymmetry between subject and predicate leads to the failure of the proposition to attain the truth which, according to Hegel, consists in the complete agreement (*Übereinstimmung*) of subject and predicate. In every proposition, he says, the predicate only expresses one single attribute of

the object referred to by the subject, which has, of course, many other attributes unexpressed by that proposition. Yet on the other hand, the object is also only an individual case of which the predicate as a general term may apply to. Thus, what the proposition is able to express is only a partial or a “deficient” identity of subject and predicate, even though the copula, according to Hegel, intends to equate them with each other. He states:

speculative (*begreifendes*) thinking behaves in a different way. Since the Concept is the object's own self, which presents itself as the *coming-to-be of the object*, it is not a passive Subject inertly supporting the Accidents; it is, on the contrary, the self-moving Concept which takes its determinations back into itself.³⁷

The crux of the matter is that the subject-predicate form, conceived from the standpoint of understanding, which considers subject and predicate to be two fixedly opposing poles of a proposition, fails to articulate the movement of the Concept (*Bewegung des Begriffs*) adequately. For speculative thinking, the relationship between subject and predicate should be a “dialectical movement” that “generates itself, going forth from, and returning to, itself.”³⁸ The subject in the “speculative proposition,” therefore, no longer represents an inert substance that behaves passively, but passes over into the predicate, which now bears the essential conceptual content of the subject. The predicate also ceases to be a mere accident and turns out instead to be the substance of the matter, because the subject regains its true determination in the predicate. In this movement, subject and predicate become reconciled with each other in a complete unity, having overcome the original division of judgment.

Nevertheless, the movement does not end up in the predicate because in it thinking suffers a “counterthrust” arising from the loss of the subject. What is now encountered in the backward movement is no longer the subject with which the movement began, rather the subject of thinking or the knowing “I” itself. Although begun from the subject of a judgment, the pivot has now been shifted over to the subject of judging, that is, to the subject who makes a judgment—a sophisticated change of perspective in which the thinking subject finally comes to realize that the most essential matter in the movement of the Concept is nothing but the self-cognition of thinking itself.

Of course, one has the right to cast doubt on this “official” account of Hegel’s speculative proposition, particularly as the “story” is so remote from what we know about the structure of predication. In order to understand the essential idea, it is indispensable to make clear the differences between “speculative” and “nonspeculative” propositions. To illustrate the peculiarity of the speculative proposition, Hegel gives us the following examples: “God is [the] being (*Gott ist das Sein*)” and “the actual is the universal (*das Wirkliche ist das Allgemeine*).”³⁹ At first glance, they appear to just be ordinary predicative propositions, but upon a closer look, they have a characteristic that distinguishes them from the ordinary propositions. Instead of an adjective or a noun

with an indefinite article, the “predicate” in Hegel’s examples is a nominalized verb or adjective accompanied by a definite article. For instance, instead of saying, “the rose is red,” a “speculative proposition” would have the form “the rose is *the* red.” With the definite article, the logical structure of the proposition has been changed fundamentally.⁴⁰ It is no longer a predicative proposition at all, but merely a “proposition of identity,” for, in this case, the word “is” does not express the logical subject-predicate relation as the subsumption of a singular under a general term, but instead the identification of two singular terms, just like the sign of equality in mathematics.⁴¹

At this point the question becomes: What does Hegel want to achieve with such “speculative propositions”? It seems a likely supposition that Hegel intends to put forward an “extraordinary” form of philosophical discourse for the sake of speculative thinking, whereas the “ordinary” predicative propositions are left untouched as the form of everyday discourse. This is, indeed, not an unusual interpretation among the leading Hegel scholars. Klaus Düsing, for example, suggests that Hegel’s speculative proposition should be understood in terms of the Aristotelian distinction between accidental and essential determinations as an “essential proposition of philosophy (*philosophischer Wesenssatz*).”⁴² According to this conception, the “predicate” of a speculative proposition does not merely express a certain property of the subject, rather it expresses its very essence (το τι ην ειναι) or substance (ουσια). Between the subject and the predicate of a speculative proposition exists, therefore, not only a logical-definitional, but also an ontological unity.

This interpretation, however, suffers from serious problems, both in a historical and in a theoretical respect, for, from the very beginning of his philosophical reflections, Hegel has already been very skeptical about the form of proposition in general—an attitude that becomes even more consolidated in his later writings. On account of this, Düsing is left no choice but to interpret the theory of speculative proposition in the *Phenomenology* as a momentary inspiration of Hegel that occupied his mind during the composition of *Phenomenology*, only to be abandoned shortly afterward in favor of the doctrine of Syllogism (*Schlusslehre*) in his mature system.⁴³

Despite this inconsistency with the otherwise continuous development of Hegel’s thought, Düsing’s interpretation has other fundamental theoretical problems. First, a proposition such as “the actual is the universal” cannot be regarded as an “essential proposition,” because it is only an identification of two singular terms without expressing any conceptual content out of either of them. It only tells us that we are eligible to “substitute” the one singular term at every place at which the other occurs.⁴⁴ Second, in a proposition of identity, the *difference* between subject and “predicate,” which is, according to Hegel, essential for the concreteness of speculative thought, remains unexpressed; in this respect, a proposition of identity has exactly the same problem of being onesided as a predicative proposition.⁴⁵ The third and most important point is

that the crucial error in this interpretation is to consider the speculative proposition as a form of proposition at all; it is doomed to failure regardless which form it takes. By sticking to the opposition of the “speculative” and the “nonspeculative” form of proposition, this interpretation commits the very same mistake seen in the spurious concept of infinity.⁴⁶

Supposing that Hegel would like to put forward an “extraordinary” form of discourse, how could he claim and justify that a proposition such as “the actual is the universal” should be read as a dialectical to-and-fro movement between subject and predicate? It is a fact that every sentence has its specific meaning in a certain context, and one cannot simply read it in the way one likes. Even if one would like to achieve a certain “special” reading by force, one would have to rely on natural language in order to explain how that special form of proposition should be understood, since our natural language is already the very basis constituting the most fundamental form of intelligible discourse. Every artificial form of discourse, therefore, will make a self-defeating claim if it purports to supersede the limitations of our natural language through its allegedly purified or “philosophized” way of expression.

Indeed, Hegel never intends to reject the “ordinary” form of subject-predicate proposition; what he does is to reflect upon its limitations and implications with a well-thought-out strategy. In accordance with the *meta-theoretical* nature of the “speculation” discussed above, the so-called speculative proposition is neither an extraordinary propositional form differentiated from the ordinary one, nor a speculative “theory of predication,” rather it is an extraordinary way to deal with linguistic expressions.⁴⁷ The genuine meaning and function of the speculative proposition is most succinctly enunciated as follows:

the general nature of the judgement or proposition, which involves the distinction of Subject and Predicate, is destroyed by the speculative proposition, and the proposition of identity which the former becomes contains the counter-thrust against that subject-predicate relationship.⁴⁸

The peculiar strategy employed by Hegel is grounded in the dilemma he is faced with. To reflect upon the very conditions under which the reflection itself is made possible, Hegel adopts a “destructive” course, in the sense that he tries to thematize those presuppositions that are usually taken for granted by “destroying” their unreflectively adopted nature. The destruction is carried out by encountering our everyday understanding of subject-predicate relationship with a “counterthrust” brought about by the speculative propositions. Such propositions are employed in a special or even “inverted (*verkehrt*)” way deliberately, in order to provoke our understanding to rethink its own presuppositions. Because the speculative proposition actually operates as a meta-theoretical reflection on our linguistic capacities, it would be more correct to call it “*speculative use of proposition*.”

Strictly speaking, the speculative propositions are “misused” propositions. This is indeed a “deliberate misuse,” for it is Hegel’s very strategy to thematize

tize the unreflectively adopted presuppositions of our intellectual discourse by intentionally infringing the rules which govern it. In view of this destructive purpose, the speculative proposition works, as Arend Kulenkampff suggests, under the principle of “making mistakes systematically (*systematisches Falschmachen*).”⁴⁹ More concretely, Hegel intends to bring about an “abnormal inhibition of thought”⁵⁰ by employing propositions of identity in a context where conceptual determinations of something through predicative propositions are expected. The failure to achieve a meaningful reading based on our common sense compels us to reflect upon our failure and to try to conceive the content again from another point of view in a correction process that repeats itself again and again.⁵¹ Under the compulsion of these permanent corrections, our thinking is forced to give up its original one-sided standpoint every time and to supersede itself by comprehending its own one-sidedness.

The most crucial difference between the “nonspeculative” and “speculative proposition” is that the former is posed as a self-sufficient unit of meaning with a certain truth value, whereas the latter raises the “demand” that our thinking should rid itself of prejudice and be “absorbed in the content” itself.⁵² For speculative thinking, the explicit content of any individual proposition is almost of secondary importance. More important is rather the underlying conceptual framework unarticulated but implicitly presupposed by that proposition. Precisely this is one of the most important tasks of the speculative proposition: to show the deficiency of holding the propositional form as the fundamental logical or semantic unit by demonstrating the dependency of every proposition on a particular context as well as an underlying conceptual framework.⁵³ In this connection, “the dialectical movement of the proposition itself”—and “this alone is,” according to Hegel, “the speculative *in act* (*das wirklich Spekulative*)”⁵⁴—is nothing but the articulation and exposition of the interdependency of propositions on each other. For, as soon as it is shown that every proposition, when taken as a self-sufficient unit, is inconsistent with what it means to be, it “sublates” itself and passes over into another proposition in which the specific one-sidedness of the former is overcome, but at the same time another one-sidedness emerges. The “counterthrust” brought about by the speculative use of propositions is the driving force for our thinking to push ahead with this process of self-questioning and self-cognition until a holistic *system* is reached in which all obscure conceptual relationships are made transparent. For Hegel, this is the ultimate goal of his *Logic*.

III. SPECULATIVE PROPOSITION AS CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL METAPHYSICS

The centrality of the speculative proposition to Hegel’s system is often underestimated; Indeed, it can be considered as *the leitmotiv* of Hegel’s *Logic* in at

least two senses: It not only, as shown above, constitutes the driving force for the dialectical movement of the Concept, but also represents the fundamental metaphysical problem with which Hegel is concerned. To put it another way, the subject-predicate form of proposition is one-sided, not merely because it is only capable of expressing one single aspect of a concrete subject matter, but, even more fundamentally, because it leads us to a "one-sided" conception about the constitution of reality, for the manner in which we talk about things certainly must have implications on how we conceive the structure of reality. This is related to one of the central problems in the traditional metaphysics: the dichotomy of *substance* and *accident*, posing as the ontological counterpart of the logical dichotomy of subject and predicate.

The traditional conception of substance has its origin in the Aristotelian metaphysics, according to which the reality is basically constituted of countless individual beings called "primary substances (πρωτη ουσια)." ⁵⁵ Such individual beings are primary according to Aristotle in the sense that "all the other things are either said of the primary substances as subjects or in them as subjects. So if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist." ⁵⁶ It can be observed that, in his doctrine of substance, Aristotle relies very much on the analysis of the logical characteristics of grammatical subjects. ⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the transition from the concept of subject to that of substance is most succinctly formulated by Kant in the chapter on Paralogism of his *Critique*: "*What cannot be thought otherwise than as subject also does not exist otherwise than as subject, and is therefore substance.*" ⁵⁸

Based on the inert dichotomy of substance and accident, the worldview of traditional metaphysics fails, according to Hegel, to satisfactorily explain the dynamic interrelation between individuals and the totality of the world as a whole. Hegel's answer to this problem is, as we know, to "sublate" the traditional conception in his monistic system of Concept from which, then, the individual beings regain their objectivity. For the sake of this ambitious project, the critique of the traditional metaphysics of substance becomes a leitmotiv of Hegel's *Logic*. ⁵⁹ This leitmotiv is also laid down in the discussion of the speculative proposition in the *Phenomenology*. Indeed, the back-and-forth movement between subject and predicate does not describe the manner in which we should read a speculative proposition, but represents the different stations of the movement of the Concept. To put it more precisely, the movement from subject to predicate signifies the *destruction* of the traditional conception of substance and the backward movement, in contrast, the *reconstruction* of a new conception of substance through the concept of "subjectivity." These two movements correspond, as a whole, to the dialectical advance in the *Logic* from the categorial level of *Being* to that of *Essence* and from the categorial level of *Essence* to that of *Concept* respectively.

Admittedly, subject and predicate have different functions in a proposition, viz. the function of referring to the object and that of determining its

characteristic; in this dichotomy, the function of the subject seems to be logically prior to that of the predicate, since in order to judge whether the predication is correct or not, we must first determine what is referred to by the subject, but not vice versa.⁶⁰ Hegel, however, raises doubts about this allegedly logical primacy of subject.

In a proposition of this kind [e.g., "God is the eternal"] one begins with the word "God"—This by itself is a meaningless sound, a mere name; it is only the predicate that says *what God is*, gives Him content and meaning. Only in the end of the proposition does the empty beginning become actual knowledge.⁶¹

The subject, taken apart from the predicates ascribable to it, is nothing more than a mere name without any conceptual content, and, to this extent, an empty word. If, for instance, we speak of God, we may have a certain idea (*Vorstellung*) associated with this name that constitutes the presupposed meaning of the subject. However, "it is contingent and a historical fact, what is, or is not, to be understood by a name."⁶² The general idea associated with the name is merely subjective, as long as it is not conceptually determined by appropriate predicates. By contrast, the content expressed by predicates is by nature objective, since it is contained in the very essence of concepts that the meaning of a particular concept is determined by its mutual relationships to other concepts. The subject, therefore, relies on the predicate to enunciate what it objectively is, leaving its presupposed primacy to be untenable.

By criticizing the logical function of the subject in this way, Hegel's main concern is the metaphysical consequence of this criticism. In accordance with the subject-predicate form, we usually comprehend reality through the categories of substance and accident. In so doing, the substance is regarded as existing for itself independently of its accidents. But such a substance, "which can be called simply 'thinghood' or 'pure essence,' is nothing else than . . . a *simple togetherness* of a plurality."⁶³ Further, the many accidents of a substance are considered to be properties that are indifferent to one another and have nothing else in common than the fact that they are held together by a particular "thinghood." Their appearance in the substance is supposed to be inessential to the substance. Nevertheless, by virtue of the pure "thinghood" alone, it is impossible to distinguish one particular substance from another because each of them could equally be regarded as "simple togetherness" or an "empty unit without thought-content."⁶⁴ In order to account for the essence or existence of a particular substance, we have to rely rather on the accidents that specify its properties. Thus, the "inessential" now turns out to be essential to what the substance is, and in return, the substance as such, turns out to be an empty concept. The alleged primacy of substance is, therefore, refuted by the very same argument already used against the primacy of the subject of a proposition, as "the *subject without predicate* is what the *thing without qualities*, the *thing-in-itself* is in the sphere of Appearance—an empty, indeterminate ground."⁶⁵

In Hegel's logical terms, traditional metaphysics has committed a fundamental error by comprehending the substance in terms of the categories of *Being*, which are characterized by the structure of immediate self-relation (*unmittelbare Beziehung-auf-sich*). However, the substance, regarded as a "mere something" or a "pure subject" existing for itself, is nothing more than a thing-in-itself, an empty concept that must be sublated by passing over to a higher categorial level. According to Hegel, substance is, indeed, a category belonging to the *Doctrine of Essence*, viz. a *relational* category, which has its "other," in this case the accidents, already integrated into itself as a constitutive moment of its own essence.⁶⁶ Only in this connection does the forward movement of the speculative proposition become intelligible: "Starting from the Subject as though this were a permanent ground, it [thinking] finds that, since the Predicate is really the Substance, the Subject has passed over into the Predicate, and, by this very fact, has been sublated."⁶⁷ In short, this speculative movement is reduced to the point that the truth of subject/substance is predicate/accident, or in terms of Hegel's *Logic*, "the truth of *being* is *essence*."⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the "destruction of substance" constitutes only half of the dialectics of the speculative proposition, which proceeds with a backward movement from predicate to subject. Even though, in the forward movement, "the Predicate itself has been expressed as a Subject, as *the being* or *essence* which exhausts the nature of the Subject,"⁶⁹ a key feature peculiar to the nature of subject is still missing in the predicate, namely the structure of reflection-into-itself (*Reflexion-in-sich*), by virtue of which an object, in spite of the manifoldness of its determinations, is to be regarded as a *unity*.⁷⁰ Under this circumstance, thinking is, so to speak, "thrown back on to the thought of the Subject."⁷¹ Thinking, however, does not simply fall back to the point at which the movement began, for the subject now being encountered is no longer the grammatical subject whose one-sidedness has already been shown by the forward movement, rather it is the thinking subject itself. This discovery forms the very foundation of Hegel's theory of subjectivity, viz. a philosophical position based on the logico-ontological primacy of the thinking subject or the "I."

Despite this discovery, is the transition from the one to another meaning of "subject" justified? It at least arouses the suspicion that Hegel is trying to compensate for a shortcoming in his argument by taking advantage of a peculiar ambiguity of the word "subject" in German (as well as in English). In fact, this transition is not a mere wordplay, but a subtle change of perspective essential to the speculative proposition. If thinking has so far gone along with the destructive movement, it must also have seen that "the solid ground which argumentation (*das Rasonniren*) has in the passive Subject is . . . shaken, and only this movement itself becomes the object."⁷² This is because the object is no longer the inert substance, but the *movement* itself, and its "correlate" also becomes the *thinking* subject who is responsible for the whole movement, instead of the *grammatical* subject. That is why the grammatical "Subject is

replaced by the knowing 'I' itself, which links the Predicates with the Subject holding them."⁷³ Through this change of perspective, the thinking subject begins to finally realize that the ultimate concern of the whole movement is nothing but its self-cognition, and the real substance is likewise no longer an inert being outside our thinking, but the actual activity of thinking itself which lends unity as well as objectivity to material things. The movement from predicate to subject of the speculative proposition represents, therefore, the reconstruction of the *substantiality* on the basis of *subjectivity*, which is one of the most crucial tenets of Hegel's system, since "everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject."⁷⁴

In Hegel's *Logic*, the reconstruction of substance is realized in the transition from the *Objective* to the *Subjective Logic*, or, more precisely, from the final category of Essence to the Concept, since "the *consummation of substance* . . . is no longer *substance* itself but something higher, the *Concept*, the *subject*."⁷⁵ Quite in contrast to our common sense, the Concept, for Hegel, is not just any random concepts which are supposed to be arrived at by generalizing certain common characteristics from different particular things; instead, it is *the* holistic system of conceptual relationships.⁷⁶ And this holistic Concept is identical with the pure subject, the self-consciousness or the "I," because they both represent the self-generating and self-determining activity that constitutes its own structure as well as that of reality.⁷⁷ Such a concept of the Concept may come across as rather strange or even mysterious, but what Hegel really intends to convey is simply the underlying conceptual framework that must be presupposed in every intelligible discourse, in every knowledge claim, and in every possible constitution of reality itself, insofar as reality is something that is intelligible at all.

In summary the central task of Hegel's *Logic* is to reflect upon the Concept—that is, the thinking subject itself—and to make transparent what has always been taken for granted by our thinking but often remained obscure to it. For good reason, the whole project revolves more or less around the linguistic form of propositions and its metaphysical implications, for we do think in language or in propositions. It would, therefore, be a fatal mistake to interpret the speculative proposition as a peculiar linguistic form, because this interpretation prevents the extraordinary significance of the speculative proposition to Hegel's system from ever coming into light.⁷⁸

NOTES

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), ed. W. Bonsiepen and H.-C. Lucas, vol. 20, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992), § 31, p. 72. English translation: G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), p. 69. Further references will be given in the form: *GW*, 20: 72 (§ 31); *EL*, 69.

2. Hegel also points out that the familiarity with the fact “that the proposition in the *form of a judgement* is not suited to express speculative truths . . . is likely to remove many misunderstandings of speculative truths.” G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik: Erster Band. Die Lehre vom Sein* (1832), ed. F. Hogemann and W. Jaeschke, vol. 21, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1984), p. 78. English translation: G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), p. 90. The other parts of Hegel's *Logic* have been published as volume 11 and 12 of the *G* (1978 and 1981). Further references will be given in the form: *GW*, 21: 78; *SL*, 90. It is the “unsuitability” of the propositional form for the expression of speculative truths that forces Hegel to develop a peculiar way of philosophical exposition (*D*), which is quite often regarded by those who are not familiar with this problem as completely unintelligible. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. W. Bonsiepen and R. Heede, vol. 9, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1980), p. 44. English translation: G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 39. Further references will be given in the form: *GW*, 9: 44; *PS*, 39.

3. I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. B. Erdmann, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vols. 3 and 4 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1903–1904), A VII. English translation: I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Further references will be given in the form: *KrV*, A VII, where, as usual, “A” refers to the first and “B” the second edition of the *Critique*.

4. See *KrV*, B 72–73.

5. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. R. Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), § 4, p. 16.

6. Obviously, Kant himself has overlooked the crucial role of language for his critical investigations into human reason. This shortcoming has already been pointed out by one of the first critics of Kant, Johann Georg Hamann, even before the publication of the second edition of the *Critique*. See J. G. Hamann, “Metakritik über den Purismus der Vernunft” (1784), in *Schriften über Sprache/Mysterien/Vernunft (1772–1788)*, ed. J. Nadler, vol. 3, *Sämtliche Werke* (Vienna: Herder, 1951), pp. 282–89. It is to be noted that Hegel also agrees with Hamann's criticism. See G. W. F. Hegel, “Hamann's Schriften” (1828), in *Schriften und Entwürfe II (1826–1831)*, ed. F. Hogemann, vol. 16, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2001), pp. 129–87.

7. H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 421.

8. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 457.

9. For example, see F. W. J. v. Schelling, *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen* (1795), ed. H. Buchner and J. Jantzen, vol. 2, *Werke* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1980), § 15, p. 146.

10. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1806/07), where the “speculative proposition” is developed, Hegel has already dissociated himself clearly from Schelling's philosophy of absolute identity. The “vacuity” of Schelling's philosophical position is, as we know, presented ironically by Hegel as “the night in which . . . all cows are black.” *GW*, 9: 17; *PS*, 9.

11. *GW*, 12: 236; *SL*, 824. In this chapter, the German word “*B*” is rendered as “Concept,” never as “Notion.”

12. *GW*, 9: 41; *PS*, 35.

13. The fundamental idea of Hegel's *Logic* is characterized by Wolfgang Wieland as follows: "Die Hegelsche Logik hat zwar das Absolute zum Gegenstand, aber sie ist keine Spekulation, die den Anspruch erheben könnte, auf dem Standpunkt des Absoluten zu stehen. Es handelt sich vielmehr um das Unternehmen des endlichen Geistes, die Kategorien zu entwickeln und zu erfassen, die für eine angemessene Auslegung des Absoluten notwendig sind. Auf dieser Ebene des endlichen Geistes bewegt sich die Darstellung der Logik." W. Wieland, "Bemerkungen zum Anfang von Hegels Logik," in *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels*, ed. R.-P. Horstmann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978), p. 203.

14. *GW*, 21: 126; *SL*, 139. "It is," according to Hegel, "only the spurious infinite which is the *beyond*, because it is *only* the negation of the finite posited as *real*—as such it is the abstract, first negation; determined *only* as negative, the affirmation of *determinate* being is lacking in it; the spurious infinite, held fast as only negative, is even *supposed to be not there*, is supposed to be unattainable. However, to be thus unattainable is not its grandeur but its defect, which is at bottom the result of holding fast to the *finite* as such as a *merely affirmative being*. It is what is untrue that is unattainable, and such an infinite must be seen as a falsity." *GW*, 21: 136; *SL*, 149.

15. See *GW*, 21: 124; *SL*, 137.

16. Instead of being the opposite of the infinite, the finite now proves to be an "ideal (*ideelles*) moment" of the process of infinite reflection. For Hegel, this conceptual relation is, in fact, already implied in the expression "infinite" itself. "In *saying* what the infinite is, namely the negation of the *finite*, the latter is itself included in what is *said*; it cannot be dispensed with for the definition or determination of the infinite. One only needs to *be aware of what one is saying* in order to find the determination of the finite in the infinite." *GW*, 21: 131; *SL*, 143. One might even consider the motto "to know what one is saying (*Wissen, was man sagt*)" as the general guiding principle of the dialectical analysis of categories in Hegel's *Logic*. See R. Bubner, "Strukturprobleme dialektischer Logik," in *Zur Sache der Dialektik* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1980), pp. 7–39.

17. See also the explanatory notes by H. S. Harris to G. W. F. Hegel, *The Jena System, 1804–1805: Logic and Metaphysics*, trans. J. W. Burbidge and G. d. Giovanni (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), pp. 29ff.

18. *GW*, 21: 124; *SL*, 137.

19. *GW*, 21: 8; *SL*, 28.

20. *GW*, 20: 70 (§ 27); *EL*, 65.

21. According to Hegel, "finitude is the most stubborn category of the understanding." *GW*, 21: 117; *SL*, 129.

22. In Kant's *Critique*, "understanding" and "reason" have been used in different senses. In the wider sense, they both mean "the higher faculty of cognition (*das obere Erkenntnisvermögen*)," i.e., the power of thinking (see *KrV*, A 130/B 169; A 835/B 863), but in the narrower sense, understanding represents the "faculty of concepts (*Vermögen der Begriffe*)" (*KrV*, A 160/B 199) and reason, by contrast, the "faculty of ideas (*Vermögen der Ideen*).¹" The latter differs from the former in the fact that ideas are, according to Kant, necessarily aimed at the "unconditioned," which is never realizable within the realm of experience (see *KrV*, A 320/B 377). Thus, it is illegitimate to lay claim to objective cognition by using reason's ideas.

23. See G. W. F. Hegel, "Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie," in *Jenaer Kritische Schriften*, ed. H. Buchner and O. Pöggeler, vol. 4,

Gesammelte Werke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1968), p. 6. English translation: G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. H. S. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 80.

24. *GW*, 20: 62 (§ 19); *EL*, 46.

25. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 465.

26. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 466.

27. Rüdiger Bubner puts the point in this way: "In order for reason to comprehend understanding's finite character it must undermine the certainty understanding has in its reflective powers and, at the same time, clear the way for speculation. Reason accomplishes this task by bringing understanding's finite forms of thought into close proximity to their archetype. . . . It, thus, becomes possible to raise understanding to its truth in reason by translating the antithesis, persisting in the semblance of unity established by reflection, into the antithesis prevailing in the relation between the real unity and its copy. Because the former is no longer a genuine antithesis, it ceases to be an obstacle for speculation." R. Bubner, "Hegel's Concept of Phenomenology," trans. C. G. Ryan, in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reappraisal*, ed. G. K. Brown-ing (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), p. 40. See also R. Bubner, "Die Metaphysik im Hintergrund der Unterscheidung des Transzendentalen vom Spekulativen," in *Amicus Plato magis amica veritas: Festschrift für Wolfgang Wieland zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. R. Enskat (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), pp. 48–59.

28. See C.-F. Lau, "Transzendenz in der Immanenz: Die Dialektik der Grenze und Hegels Idee einer spekulativen Metaphysik," in *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen: XIX. Deutscher Kongress für Philosophie. 23–27 September 2002 in Bonn. Sektionsbeiträge*, ed. W. Hogrebe (Bonn: Sinclair, 2002), pp. 947–57.

29. Hegel's point is that it is "logically" impossible to set or to recognize a limit without having already gone beyond it, because what makes a limit a limit always necessarily includes knowledge of what is on both sides of it. This so-called dialectic of limit (*Dialektik der Grenze*), which is developed by Hegel chiefly as a counterargument against Kant's conception of the "thing-in-itself," belongs certainly to the most important and influential insights of Hegel's *Logic*. Even Wittgenstein also recognizes in the preface to his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* the fact that "in order to be able to set a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable." L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 3.

30. *GW*, 21: 105; *SL*, 117, emphasis mine.

31. *GW*, 12: 48; *SL*, 618, emphasis mine. In Fragment 22 of the *Vorlesungsmanskripte zur Philosophie der Natur und des Geistes (1803/04)*, Hegel writes: "die Sprache ist . . . ebenso Verstand und Vernunft." G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I*, ed. K. Düsing and H. Kimmerle, vol. 6, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1975), p. 318.

32. Hegel sees in the German word "Urteil" an etymological evidence for his interpretation of judgment as the division of the original unity of the Concept: "The etymological meaning of 'Urteil' in our language is more profound and expresses the unity of Concept as what comes first, and its distinction as the *original* division, which is what the judgment truly is." *GW*, 20: 182 (§ 166); *EL*, 244. This interpretation of "Urteil" as "ursprüngliche Teilung" is originally a thesis of Hölderlin: see J. C. F. Hölderlin, "Urtheil und Seyn," in *Tod des Empedokles: Aufsätze*, ed. F. Beißner, vol. 4/I,

Sämtliche Werke: Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1961), pp. 216–17.

33. Beside a number of short remarks on the limitation of the subject-predicate form, there are four places in Hegel's mature writings where he deals with the problem of judgment or proposition in depth: (1) the discussion of the "speculative proposition" in the preface to the *Phenomenology* (GW, 9: 41ff.; PS, 35ff.); (2) Sections 28 to 31 of the "First Position of Thought with Respect to Objectivity" in the *Encyclopedia* (GW, 20: 70ff. [§§ 28ff.]; EL, 66ff.); (3) the second remark to the "Unity of Being and Nothing" in the *Doctrine of Being* (GW, 21: 77ff.; SL, 90ff.); and (4) the chapter of "Judgment" in the *Doctrine of Concept* (GW, 12: 53ff.; SL, 623ff.).

34. See G. Wohlfart, *Der spekulative Satz: Bemerkungen zum Begriff der Spekulation bei Hegel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981).

35. For the subtle function and status of the *Phenomenology* in Hegel's system, see H. F. Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1965). See also C.-F. Lau, "Voraussetzungs- und Bestimmungslosigkeit: Bemerkungen zum Problem des Anfangs in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik," in *Perspektiven der Philosophie: Neues Jahrbuch* 26 (2000): 297–303.

36. GW, 9: 42; PS, 36–37.

37. GW, 9: 42; PS, 37.

38. GW, 9:4 5; PS, 40.

39. GW, 9: 44; PS, 38–39. The example "God is [the] being" has misled some interpretations to assume that it is the special contents of the concepts of "God" and "Being" which make the proposition "speculative." It is, therefore, not insignificant to keep in mind that Hegel also gives us the second example "the actual is the universal." And we shall see that the "speculative element" of such propositions is actually not a matter of "content," but rather of "form."

40. Hegel himself knows this logical difference very well: "when one says: 'the actual is the universal' (*das Wirkliche ist das Allgemeine*), the actual as subject disappears in its predicate. The universal is not meant to have merely the significance of a predicate, as if the proposition asserted only that the actual is universal (*das Wirkliche sey allgemein*); on the contrary, the universal is meant to express the essence of the actual." GW, 9: 44; PS, 39.

41. See G. Frege, "Über Begriff und Gegenstand," in *Funktion, Begriff, Bedeutung: Fünf logische Studien*, ed. G. Patzig (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), pp. 678ff.

42. K. Düsing, "Syllogistik und Dialektik in Hegels spekulativer Logik," in *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik: Formation und Rekonstruktion*, ed. D. Henrich (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), p. 20. See also K. Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik: Systematische und entwicklungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Prinzip des Idealismus und zur Dialektik* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1995), pp. 198ff.

43. See K. Düsing, "Syllogistik und Dialektik in Hegels spekulativer Logik," p. 21.

44. Since the word "is" in this case only expresses a simple identity of two singular terms, we might even substitute it with the sign of equality "=". However, as Wittgenstein tells us, "expressions of the form ' $a = b$ ' are . . . mere representational devices. They state nothing about the meaning of the signs ' a ' and ' b .'" L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, § 4.242, p. 61; see also §§ 5.53ff., pp. 105ff.; § 6.23, p. 133.

45. See *GW*, 21: 78; *SL*, 90–91.

46. Heinz Röttges rejects the suggestion of an “extraordinary” linguistic form for philosophy with the following argument: “die wichtigste bzw. bedenklichste Folgerung aus der Etablierung einer esoterischen philosophischen Sprache oberhalb der exoterischen Umgangssprache wäre die Unmöglichkeit der Einsehbarkeit der Selbstbewegung des Inhalts, da ja dann die Bewegung hervorgerufen würde allein durch das Sprach-bzw. Reflexionsniveau des philosophierenden Subjekts, womit der Methodenbegriff Hegels, der ja an der Selbstbewegung des Inhalts hängt, im Kern getroffen, nämlich zerstört wäre.” H. Röttges, *Der Begriff der Methode in der Philosophie Hegels* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1981), p. 67.

47. Hegel himself speaks rarely of speculative proposition. Instead of drawing the distinction between “ordinary” and “speculative proposition,” Hegel refers instead to the distinction between the “ratiocinative (*räsonierendes*)” and the “speculative thinking (*begreifendes/spekulatives Denken*)” of propositions (see *GW*, 9: 42–43; *PS*, 36–37). Thus, it is not so much a question of *what* a proposition is, but of *how* a proposition is viewed and understood. Jere Surber puts the difference in this way: “the sentence ‘God is Being’ can express *both* simple identity and the dialectic of the ‘speculative.’ However, the manner in which we *consider* and *reflect upon* such a sentence is precisely what comes in question for Hegel. *The same sentence becomes speculative by virtue of the very manner in which we comprehend and reflect upon it.* . . . Thus, when Hegel speaks of the ‘speculative sentence,’ he refers not to any particular sentence, distinguished on the basis of some special content or extra-ordinary form, but to the comprehended concrete unity of objective articulation and subjective comprehension which lies at the basis of any occurrence of language.” J. Surber, “Hegel’s Speculative Sentence,” in *Hegel-Studien* 10 (1975): p. 228.

48. *GW*, 9: 43; *PS*, 38.

49. A. Kulenkampff, *Antinomie und Dialektik: Zur Funktion des Widerspruchs in der Philosophie* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970), pp. 44, 66–67.

50. *GW*, 9: 44; *SL*, 39.

51. Hegel describes the necessary process of correction as follows: “The philosophical proposition, since it *is* a proposition, leads one to believe that the usual subject-predicate relation obtains, as well as the usual attitude towards knowing. But the philosophical content destroys this attitude and this opinion. We learn by experience that we meant something other than we meant to mean; and this correction of our meaning compels our knowing to go back to the proposition, and understand it in some other way.” *GW*, 9: 44; *PS*, 39. See also W. Wieland, “Bemerkungen zum Anfang von Hegels Logik,” p. 204.

52. *GW*, 9: 44; *PS*, 38.

53. Robert Brandom interprets Hegel’s insight as follows: “Recognizing that every concept actually applied in any empirical judgment is only a more or less adequate expression of the implicit articulation of things entails acknowledging that no determinate judgment ought to be taken to be unqualifiedly true. . . . So to take the judgment to be the unit of cognition (as Kant does, because it is the minimal unit of cognitive *responsibility*) is already to commit oneself to an unsustainable view of the nature of the determinateness of conceptual content.” B. Brandom, “Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel’s Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel’s Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms,” in *European Journal of Philosophy*

7:2 (1999): 184. It is to be noted that one of the most important principles of Hegel's philosophy is that "the True is the whole" (*GW*, 9: 19; *PS*, 11), so that, for Hegel, the minimal logical (and also ontological) unit of truth is already the system as a whole. For this reason, every single proposition or judgment is inevitably "false" and subject to being "sublated" in the holistic system of Concept.

54. *GW*, 9: 45; *PS*, 40.

55. Aristotle, *Categories*, ed. J. Barnes, vol. 1, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 5:2a12.

56. Aristotle, *Categories*, 5:2b3–6.

57. The traditional conception of substance is based chiefly on the analysis of substance by Aristotle in the *Categories*, even though Aristotle develops a much more subtly differentiated theory of substance in his later work *Metaphysics*, in which the concept of substance is more precisely characterized by means of the differentiations of "form" (εἶδος) und "matter" (ὕλη), "potentiality" (δυναμικ) and "actuality" (ἐνεργεια) and, above all, by the concept of "essence" (το τι ἦν εἶναι). See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. J. Barnes, vol. 1, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), bk. 7 (Z).

58. *KrV*, B 410. See also the formulation of the same principle in the first edition of Kant's *Critique*: "That the representation of which is the *absolute subject* of our judgments, and hence cannot be used as the determination of another thing is *substance*." *KrV*, A 348.

59. See a very instructive essay of Dieter Henrich, which attempts to reconstruct the leitmotiv of the whole Hegelian system by viewing it as a critical revision of the traditional metaphysics of substance: D. Henrich, "Die Formationsbedingungen der Dialektik: Über die Untrennbarkeit der Methode Hegels von Hegels System," in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 139–40 (1982): 139–62. Furthermore, Michael Theunissen points out that Hegel's argumentation works essentially under the methodological principle of the "unity of critique and exposition (*Einheit von Kritik und Darstellung*). See M. Theunissen, *Sein und Schein: Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980).

60. The logical asymmetry of subject and predicate in a proposition is, for example, clarified by Strawson as follows: "The difference in role of the two terms [i.e., singular and general terms] might be held to be shown by the implied differences between the ways in which there might fail to be such an object. . . . The failure of application of the singular term would not, like that of its partner, depend on its partner's success. . . . Whether the sentence is true or false depends on the success or failure of the general term; but the failure of the singular term appears to deprive the general term of the chance of either success or failure." P. F. Strawson, "Singular Terms and Predication," in *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 55–56.

61. *GW*, 9: 20; *PS*, 12–13.

62. *GW*, 12: 54; *SL*, 625.

63. *GW*, 9: 72; *PS*, 68.

64. *GW*, 9: 45–6; *PS*, 40.

65. *GW*, 12: 57; *SL*, 628.

66. It is a fundamental difference between the *Doctrine of Being* and the *Doctrine of Essence* that, for the categories of the former, e.g., the "finite" and the "infinite," "the meaning of each appears to be complete even without its other," whereas the categories

of the latter, e.g., “cause” and “effect,” “however much they may be taken as isolated from each other, are at the same time meaningless one without the other.” *GW*, 21: 109–10; *SL*, 122. See also V. Hösle: *Hegels System: Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem des Intersubjektivität* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998), pp. 210ff.

67. *GW*, 9: 43; *PS*, 37.

68. *GW*, 11: 241; *SL*, 389.

69. *GW*, 9: 44; *PS*, 38.

70. See D. Henrich, “Hegels Logik der Reflexion: Neue Fassung,” in *Die Wissenschaft der Logik und die Logik der Reflexion* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1978), pp. 206ff.

71. *GW*, 9: 44; *PS*, 38.

72. *GW*, 9: 43; *PS*, 37.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *GW*, 9: 18; *PS*, 10. See also D. Henrich, “Hegels Logik der Reflexion: Neue Fassung,” pp. 204ff.

75. *GW*, 12: 14; *SL*, 580.

76. What Hegel calls the Concept (*Begriff*) is characterized by Brandom as “the holistic inferential system of determinate concepts and commitments articulated by means of those concepts.” R. Brandom, “Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel’s Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel’s Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms,” p. 165.

77. The structural identity of the pure Subject and the Concept is, according to Hegel, an important insight from Kant’s *Critique*: “It is one of the most profound and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the unity which constitutes the nature of the Concept is recognized as the original synthetic unity of *apperception*, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness.” *GW*, 12: 17–18; *SL*, 584. See also R. B. Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 16–41.

78. For a more detailed study, see C.-F. Lau, *Hegels Urteilkritik: Systematische Untersuchungen zum Grundproblem der spekulativen Logik*, vol. 6, Section II (Studies), jena-sophia: Studien und Editionen zum Deutschen Idealismus und zur Frühromantik (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004).

CHAPTER 3

The Language of Hegel's Speculative Philosophy

Angelica Nuzzo

The students at the University of Jena attending Hegel's first lectures on Logic and Metaphysics held at the beginning of the 1800s were the first to protest the obscurity of Hegel's language as well as his "abominable habits of speech." Hegel's delivery was all the more irritating if compared to the brilliant style of the lectures given by Schelling during the same period at the same university. According to contemporary testimonies, the same obscurity continued to afflict the text used by Hegel in his later Heidelberg and Berlin lectures: the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in Outline for Use in His Lectures* (1817, 1827, and 1830). Among the first critics of speculative philosophy, Søren Kierkegaard underscored Hegel's "perverse" use of language, and attacked his pretension to "absolute knowledge" by showing the non-sense—even the comical effects—to which his language often gives raise.¹ Later on, addressing the problem of the "method" of speculative philosophy, William James renewed the criticism of Hegel's language. James distinguishes between the "central thought" of dialectic which, he claims, is "easy to catch," from its formulation that, due to the language in which it is expressed, is instead "exceedingly difficult to follow."

[Hegel's] passion for the slipshod in the way of sentences, his unprincipled playing fast and loose with terms; his dreadful vocabulary, calling what completes a thing its "negation," for example; his systematic refusal to let you know whether he is talking logic or physics or psychology, his whole deliberately adopted policy of ambiguity and vagueness, in short: all these things make his present-day readers wish to tear their hair—or his—out in desperation.²

To be sure, in the program of the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel anticipates his reader's reactions to the way in which dialectic develops. Thus, he

presents the “road” that natural consciousness has to travel in the *Phenomenology* “as the *pathway of doubt*, or more precisely as the *way of despair*.”³ As James reminds us, this desperation is in part produced by the intrinsic difficulty of the language of dialectic. Yet, given the identity of form and content that constitutes one of the central claims of Hegel’s philosophy, the peculiar experience of the language in which dialectic is formulated becomes the peculiar experience of the dialectical nature of language itself. This, in turn, is constitutive of the experience of consciousness examined in the *Phenomenology*. Language, in Hegel’s philosophy, is not just a matter of form; it is a matter of form as well as of content.

I. HEGEL’S LANGUAGE

The topic of this chapter is the use of language in Hegel’s philosophy. My aim is to show the internal connection between the language employed by speculative philosophy and its methodological claims, and to further explore the identity of philosophical form and content proper to dialectic. My starting point consists in taking seriously the protests of Hegel’s critic. For, despite their polemical vein, James’s remarks on Hegel’s use of philosophical language are indeed extremely accurate. It is true that Hegel generally avoids any binding definition of technical terms with the consequence that what in a certain passage seems to have a certain definite meaning, at other junctures of the argument shows an unexpected new sense. This may certainly be called, in James’s words, “ambiguity” or “vagueness,” or, in more recent formulations, “indeterminateness” of meaning.⁴ Moreover, it is undeniable that Hegel’s vocabulary is rich in new expressions that either do not belong to the German philosophical language at all (as in the case of expressions such as *Ansichsein* and *Fürsichsein* that rather translate the scholastic Latin of the *in se* and *per se*)⁵ or do violence to language through the way in which they are employed. Examples of this “violence” are Hegel’s use of the negativity of contradiction to produce new positive meanings (how can we call what completes a thing’s determination its negation?—protested James) or the substitution of the expression “the truth of x is y” to the proposition: “x is true.” In addition, Hegel’s use of language seems careless of disciplinary boundaries. His logic speaks the language of metaphysics—but takes up the language of natural sciences, mathematics, and psychology as well. The logic does assume (or mimic) the vocabulary of these sciences so well that it is sometimes difficult to say why—could continue the critic—Hegel’s system of philosophy needs a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of spirit to complete the task of a logic that already seems to embrace both.

William James’s correct observations will lead my analysis to conclusions that are quite different from the ones drawn by most critics of speculative phi-

losophy. Once we have ascertained *that* Hegel's logic speaks the language of metaphysics, the crucial issue still regards the meaning to be attributed to this boundary transgression: *Why* does speculative logic (need to) take up the language of metaphysics after Kant has clearly drawn the limits of their respective domains? It is clear that at stake in Hegel's linguistic "confusion" is the fundamental thesis that presents speculative logic as "*eigentliche Metaphysik*"—metaphysics proper or true metaphysics. More generally, once we have ascertained *that* the language of Hegel's philosophy defies definition, endorses ambiguity and vagueness, and cancels disciplinary boundaries, the real question remains: *why* does this philosophy need to be expressed in such a language? An indirect proof for this necessity is offered by the failure of all most recent attempts to a "formalization" or "axiomatization" of Hegel's dialectic—that is, of all attempts to translate speculative logic in the language of modern formal logic.⁶

Hegel's famous claim in the very first chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* will guide my approach to the problems posed by the language of his philosophy. The theorem formulated therein: "language is . . . the more truthful,"⁷ if applied to Hegel's own texts, suggests that all the previously mentioned flaws of his language may display a necessity that accounts for some distinctive characters of speculative philosophy and ultimately for the essential features of dialectical method as such. In other words, my contention is that there is a "speculative spirit of language"⁸ that is integral to Hegel's method. For this method is not only formulated by but also practiced through that language. This is the thesis that I want to explore in the following considerations.

My aim is to show that the language in which Hegel's philosophy is written is constitutive of the dialectical method that structures speculative philosophy as system. Language is not simply the static *medium*, given once and for all, in which method is carried through; language, for Hegel, is itself method. Method, in turn, is neither *instrument* of knowledge nor the *particular manner* or *mode* peculiar to the process of cognition.⁹ It is rather the intimate structure of reason in its self-development toward the complete system of its logical and real forms. Since the method is completely identical with its factual *Darstellung* or exposition, I will conclude that the language in which this exposition takes place constitutes an integral part of the method. The method displays, for Hegel, an *objective* dimension that supersedes any subjective condition of thinking and expresses the "actuality" of "*objective* thinking."¹⁰ This objective dimension is analogous to the objective *medium* in which language articulates its forms. Language, for Hegel, is not the *instrument* of subjective thinking (and communication); it is rather the objective *medium* and condition within which all particular, subjective communication and expression becomes possible for the first time. To this extent, it is rather subjective thinking that becomes possible

through its linguistic articulation. This claim can be verified at the level of Hegel's presentation of subjective spirit as well.

In what follows, I examine the connection between the language of Hegel's philosophy and his presentation of dialectical method. In what sense is the *language* in which speculative philosophy is written *constitutive* of (and not merely accidental to) the *method* of dialectical thinking? In what sense can be claimed that speculative thinking can only be expressed in the "vague" and "ambiguous" language of Hegel's philosophy (and not, for example, in the language of symbolic logic)? In the first part of the argument, I focus on some crucial passages of the *Science of Logic* in which Hegel presents his idea of "absolute method" as method of speculative thinking; in this connection, I examine the relation between the idea of method and Hegel's view of language as presented in the preface to the *Science of Logic*. In the second part of my argument, I discuss a few concrete examples of Hegel's peculiar use of language bringing to the fore some typically speculative expressions encountered in the *Science of Logic*.

II. LANGUAGE IS METHOD/METHOD IS LANGUAGE

Despite his attempts at separating the method of Hegel's dialectic from his language—or Hegel's "one virtue" from his "thousand crimes"¹¹—William James eventually recognizes that, once the gist of dialectic is mastered, then language shows its cunning "truthfulness" by inexorably affecting every content of thought. If the interpreter that favors nondialectical thinking reads Hegel's texts trying to save content and method of thinking from the confusing power of speculative language, s/he soon has to acknowledge that this language works like a trap from which nothing escapes. Language becomes one with the method that it expresses.

Once catch well the knack of [Hegel's] scheme of thought and you are lucky if you ever get away from it. It is all you can see. Let any one pronounce anything, and your feeling of a contradiction being implied becomes a habit, almost a motor habit in some persons who symbolize by a stereotyped gesture the position, sublation, and final reinstatement involved. If you say "two" or "many," your speech betrayeth you, for the very name collects them into one. If you express doubt, your expression contradicts its content, for the doubt itself is not doubted but affirmed. If you say "disorder," what is that but a certain bad kind of order?¹²

In this passage, Hegel's critic finds himself repeating the same argument that the *Phenomenology* uses in response to sense certainty's naive attempt to circumvent the universal—and dialectical—power of language. The argument, to be sure, reposes the traditional challenge of skepticism. Language makes us say the opposite of what we mean. Language is no docile instrument of con-

sciousness; it is rather a medium endowed with a logic (and a life) of its own. Ultimately, it is in language that lies the discovery of dialectic, namely the power of (self-)contradiction. Because of (and through) its objective linguistic expression, dialectical thinking becomes, in James's rendering, an obsessive psychological habit that cannot be avoided—it becomes all-pervasive “method.” Thus, as “modality of knowledge” and “modality of being”¹³ at the same time, dialectic is embedded in language and stereotyped in “gesture.”

The experience of Hegel's critic shows that the speculative language of Hegel's philosophy is no accidental or external feature of his thought. It is rather a crucial methodological device of dialectic. In other words, Hegel's language is an integral part of the method of speculative philosophy: the method of contradiction must be articulated in a linguistic form in which the self-contradictory character of all judgments or propositions comes to the fore. Hegel's philosophy validates a statement that formal logic would reject as absurd: the language of contradiction is itself contradictory—and it is so by necessity if contradiction, as dialectic claims, is indeed necessary to the movement of thinking.

The unity between method and language, so disconcerting for Hegel's critics, proceeds from the characterization of “absolute method” provided at the end of the *Science of Logic*. While the thematic presentation of the method can take place only at the conclusion of the logical process, the pervasive role of language in the *Darstellung* or exposition of the process is the concrete sign of the method's presence throughout the entire development. The method becomes visible as dynamic process (and not simply as static result of the process) because it is delivered by a *Darstellung* that becomes objective and gains its permanence in language. Language is not only *Dasein* of “spirit,” as Hegel claims in the philosophy of subjective spirit. In the *Logic*, language is *Dasein* of the speculative method.

The French sinologist Marcel Granet once mused: “Method is the road after one has traveled it.” Even if the etymology proposed by Granet is clearly imaginary—*metà-odòs*, after the road—his remark has a serious, indeed a polemical, intent. In any scientific inquiry, discourse on method has value only if it is a reflection a posteriori on a piece of concrete research, not when it presents itself as a series of a priori prescriptions. To reconstruct an itinerary when it has already reached its conclusion always involves the risk of teleology. In retrospect, the uncertainties, difficulties, and mistakes disappear or are transformed into steps of a stair that heads straight to the goal.

At first sight, Hegel's view of method seems very close to this description. At the end of the *Logic*, in the last chapter on the “Absolute Idea,” Hegel uncovers, retrospectively, the hidden, immanent “soul”¹⁴ that has been at work in the development of the whole logical process. Hegel's method, however, defeats any too simple, merely extrinsic teleology by establishing the primacy of the process with regard to any of its (partial or total) results. Since method

represents the *self*-development of the concept, it is not the movement of something given toward a given goal. It is rather, paradoxically, the coming-to-be of the subject of the logical process together with the coming-to-be of the process itself. The properly *dialectical* character of the method consists precisely in its *antiteleological* and *antideterministic* structure. The process is not teleological because method is not a set of already made rules that reason only needs to apply in order to achieve a given goal. Method is rather the imperative that prescribes at every new level of the process to set a new goal and to invent the means to reach it. These two directions eventually converge into the unity of the obtained result once it has been obtained (and never before). There is no real goal before it has been reached, and when it has been reached it is no longer a goal. Furthermore, the result can never be foreseen. It can only be anticipated from a standpoint that is merely introductory and does not properly belong to science or method. "The real issue is not exhausted by stating it as an aim, but by carrying it out, nor is the result the actual whole, but rather the result together with the process through which it came about. The aim by itself is a lifeless universal, just as the guiding tendency is a mere drive (*das bloße Treiben*) that as yet lacks an actual existence; and the bare result is the corpse which has left the guiding tendency behind it."¹⁵ Hegel's method is not the grammar of dialectic but the lived, imaginative spirit of language that is manifested in the concrete employment of language itself. Lived language can neither be experienced nor deduced from its naked grammar and its rules. For Hegel, grammar is not method of language (the opposite is rather the case). Truly novel achievements can be recognized for what they are only *after* they appear. We can then see that they have proved true or successful in ways that had not been provided for beforehand, either conceptually or causally.

The method is . . . to be recognized as the unrestrictedly universal, internal and external mode; and as the absolutely infinite force, to which no object, presenting itself as something external, remote from and independent of reason, could offer resistance or be of a particular nature in opposition to it, or could not be penetrated by it. It is therefore *soul and substance*, and anything whatever is comprehended and known in its truth only when it is *completely subjugated (unterworfen) to the method*.¹⁶

In this passage, Hegel identifies the method with speculative reason, taken in its dynamic function as a force of infinite power. This force is the creative power of *radical self-production*. Self-production, however, is possible only when the condition of complete *immanence* is fulfilled—that is, when all external intervention, goal, and standpoint is eliminated. Viewing the end of the *Logic* by recalling, at the same time, its beginning, it is clear that according to Hegel *before and outside the process there is neither something to be produced nor something that produces*. The development that the conclusion of the *Logic*

names "absolute method"—and that retrospectively encompasses the logical process as a whole—is "absolute" first of all in a strictly etymological sense: it is *ab-solutus* from all possible presuppositions, assumptions, conditions or even goals. *Method is a law without legislator, a process without subject, an activity without a faculty that exercises it; it is the utterance of the "original word (ursprüngliches Wort)"*¹⁷ *without a voice uttering it.* Its validity does not rest upon the empirical existence of a subject that follows the law or pronounces the word. Such validity is justified by the process that first institutes those subjects which, in order to even exist or subsist *as rational subjects*, need to be "completely subjugated"—that is, committed to the method. At the end of the Logic, Hegel shows that the creativity of dialectical method is the creativity of the "original word" that gives reality to things by naming them (whereby the Latin saying *nomina sunt consequential rerum* is radically reversed). For something to be named, means to be recognized as immanent determination in the development of pure thinking or the concept. This development marks the condition of all "being" and of "all truth." "All else is error, confusion, opinion, endeavor, caprice, and transitoriness."¹⁸ "All else" is what cannot be named, that is, what cannot receive an existence in language.

At the very beginning of the Logic, in the preface to its second edition (1831), Hegel reaches a similar conclusion with regard to the relation between the objective nature of speculative thinking and the logical forms whose expression takes place in language. Hegel suggests that the condition that allows the Logic to begin is the "subjugation" of subjective thinking to the objective forms of thought and their linguistic expression. Thereby the "opposition of consciousness" that still characterized the *Phenomenology* is left behind once and for all. The "logic"—*die Logik*—is now distinguished from *das Logische*, from the "element" or *medium* in which the determinations of "objective thought" are successively displayed and from which subjective thinking and consciousness will first emerge. Even though language is not immediately identical with the "logical element," it is its progressive manifestation, actualization, and articulation up to the point of the complete self-referential intelligibility of the absolute idea. Herein the "original word" is the word that speaks only of itself—language becomes identical with *Logos* in its full actuality. At this point, the "absolute form" is completely actualized: the form produces its own content and the content gives itself adequate form; language speaks only of itself thereby portraying its own movement (and this movement alone). Language and logical form do not refer to something else, namely to a separate content or matter, but express the self-relation of form as such—independently of any reference to content or matter. Language expresses the movement of the form. This fundamental identity yields Hegel's idea of dialectical method.

On Hegel's view, the pure thought-determinations of the *Logic* and its language stand in homologous relation. The relation between the successive

unfolding of the thought-determinations in the logical element and the process of the *Logic* as a whole is the same as the relation between the abstract grammar of a language and its “substantial, living value.”¹⁹ Subjective thinking must accept itself as being “completely subjugated” to a grammar that it does not immediately understand, if it wants to master the language in which that grammar will eventually become alive. To this extent, neither language nor the abstract thought determinations can be considered, for Hegel, mere external instruments or means that subjective thinking has in its steady “possession” and only needs to apply to a given content or task. They are, on the contrary, the living, universal *medium* of pure thought, that which constitutes pure logical thinking itself. No grammar, taken abstractly, is guarantee of its correct use. The “original word” of the Logos, being one with its “expression,” is to be found, in fact, only at the very end of the *Logic*. The original word of speculative rationality is, for Hegel, not at the beginning but at the end.

Through language, the logical forms permeate the conscious as well as the unconscious life of spirit to the point that “it is much more difficult to believe that the forms of thought . . . are means for us, rather than that *we serve them, that in fact they have us in their possession.*”²⁰ With this claim, Hegel transforms the idea of a subject that thinks by means of language into the idea of a language that, in its universality, has the individual subject in its possession, and thereby constitutes the very possibility of all meaningful individual utterance. At issue here is the same relation established at the end of the *Logic* by the structures of “absolute method.” The universal language that keeps us in its possession is the logical language of dialectical method. If method is the absolute form of “all truth,” then, in the same way, no individual claim of truth can be held up against the universality of the logical forms. For, Hegel asks, “what is there more in *us* against them, how shall *we*, how shall *I*, set myself up as more universal than they, which are the universal as such?”²¹ Clearly, for Hegel, the language of personal pronouns (the possibility of saying I or We) is not the original dimension of speculative language but the final product or the result of the entire logical development. Thus, the possibility of uttering (the Kantian) “I think” is not the foundation of speculative logic but rather its very result. It emerges, for the first time, at the level of “subjective logic,” that is, in the logic of the concept. The highest figure of subjectivity, namely “personality,” is presented only at the level of the “absolute idea.”

The chapter on method at the end of the *Logic* contains the final proof that the purely logical process of speculative thinking is not only possible, but is actual (*wirklich*) and concrete as an accomplished fact. The proof that dialectic is indeed successful as “absolute” (i.e., systematic) method of speculative thinking is represented precisely by the fact that the logical process eventually leads to the self-thematization of its own procedures. Retrospectively, however, the only testimony of the actuality of the logical process is the language in which such process has acquired a material form of existence

(*Dasein*), namely the language in which the *Science of Logic* is written. "The logic exhibits the self-movement of the absolute idea only as the original word, which is an *expression/extrinsecation or utterance* (*Äußerung*), but an utterance that in being has immediately vanished again as something external (*Äußeres*); the idea is therefore only in this self-determination of *hearing itself* (*sich zu vernehmen*); it is in pure thought, in which difference is not yet otherness, but is and remains perfectly transparent to itself."²² The logic is the process of *Äußerung* of the original word. *Äußerung* is both exteriorization and expression or utterance. However, the exteriority produced by the original word or the Logos is not something really "external," that is, is not yet "otherness" but is still only word. The original word of the *Logic* becomes existing word that is completely self-referential: it speaks of itself and to itself (and it hears only itself); in its being uttered, it portrays its own movement and development and thereby gives to itself a content. The task of the *Realphilosophie* and, in particular, of the philosophy of spirit will be to ground the possibility for dialectical thinking to speak to—and speak of—the "other of itself"; that is, to speak, among other things, of contents that exist outside of language and arguably even resist linguistic articulation.

III. THE LANGUAGE OF HEGEL'S *LOGIC*

If it is true, as I have argued above, that the language in which Hegel's *Logic* is written is not an accidental and undesired external appearance of dialectic but is a necessary requisite that fulfills the methodological claim presented in the conclusion of the logical process, then we need to show what is the immanent function that the lack of definition of technical terms, the ambiguity and vagueness of their use, the self-referential character of predication, and so forth, play within the development of Hegel's *Logic*. Thus, in what follows, I will discuss under two general headings the peculiarity of some Hegelian expressions, trying to show in what sense the language of Hegel's text responds to a precise methodological aim, and is not an undesired side-product of the theory. I will examine, first, a case of "homonymy" or "ambiguity" that presents itself in Hegel's distinction between two "languages" of which philosophy makes use; second, I will address a different case of homonymy, namely "vagueness" or *Bedeutungsverschiebung* (displacement or shift of meaning). I will argue that these procedures, already under attack by the critic of dialectic as sources of confusion and lack of clarity, are vehicles of crucial operations of Hegel's dialectic. In particular, they allow speculative logic to make the "transition" (*Übergang*) from one discrete sphere of the process to the next, and eventually lead to the constitution of the process as totality of the complete "system" of all logical forms. In what follows, I will limit my consideration to the first, more general issue of homonymy.

Homonymy—or the use of words that are the same in sound and spelling and different in meaning—is at issue in the *Science of Logic* at two different levels. (i) On the one hand, with regard to the procedures of pure speculative thinking, Hegel comes to terms with it by distinguishing between the “language of the concept (*Sprache des Begriffs*)” and the “language of representation (*Sprache der Vorstellung*).” The latter is permitted—albeit always in combination with the first—only when dialectic deals with real objects; that is, at the level of the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit. Hegel points to the fact that the same term may display two different meanings when used, respectively, in the two different “languages,” and therefore must be recognized as a different name. (ii) On the other hand, homonymy is a procedure at work within the logical process. It allows for the identification of logical structures on the basis of both their inner constitution and their relative position within a systematic whole. At this level, the use of homonymy explains why Hegel needs to avoid definitions based exclusively on the internal characterization of given terms. Meaning, in Hegel’s *Logic*, is function of the systematic position of a particular structure, and hence of the complex of systematic relations that it entertains with preceding and following structures. I will come back to this latter point when addressing the issue of the “transformation of meaning” proper to successive logical forms.

(i) “*Language of the Concept*” and “*Language of Representation*”

At the most general level, the distinction between “language of the concept” and “language of representation” serves Hegel the purpose of characterizing the *Logic* as science of *pure* thinking in opposition to religion and to the sphere of opinion and ordinary thinking. Hegel claims that the *Logic* speaks the language of the concrete concept or the “language of the gods” as opposed to the “language of the humans,” which owes its merely illusory concreteness to representation. The latter conveys, apparently under the same terms, a different cognitive content. With his formulation, Hegel refers to Plato’s *Cratylus* in which Homer appears as the first to introduce the distinction between the two languages. Hegel formulates this argument for the first time in the early *Skeptizismusaufsatz*; he repeats it again in the preface to the second edition of the *Encyclopedia*, and yet again in his later review of Goeschel’s *Aphorismen* (1829).

In the Jena *Skeptizismusaufsatz*, Hegel mentions Diogenes Laertius’s testimony according to which the ancient skeptics saw in Homer the “founder of skepticism because he makes use of different names in different connections,”²³ thereby providing a proof for the relativity of language. I want to underscore that the use of different names (to say the same thing) in different occasions and contexts is related by Hegel to skepticism as philosophical method. Later on, in the preface to the 1827 edition of the *Encyclopedia*,

Hegel addresses the difference between philosophy and religion by bringing to the fore the difference between the language of philosophy and the language of religion. While “the content” of the two disciplines “is the same,” he claims that the same thing has, respectively, two different names—so, as Homer says, “that certain things have two names, one in the language of the gods, the other in the language of the humans.”²⁴ Significantly, however, according to Hegel the “language of the gods” is employed by philosophy, not by religion. In addition, the two names differ only for their reference either to the concept or to representation with regard to the issue of intelligibility and cognition—for the rest, they are really the same name. Clearly, in this passage, Hegel has Plato in mind who, in the *Cratylus*, examining what “Homer says of names” mentions the distinction between language of the gods and language of the humans as a distinction meant precisely to defeat homonymy. However, whereas Plato’s interest is ultimately to distinguish the different names displayed by one and the same thing, Hegel points to the fact that speculative logic, while using the same terms as ordinary language, provides them with a different and new meaning, thereby revealing their *true* meaning. Homonymy is here a necessary step structuring the process of cognition. Philosophical cognition starts by apprehending the language of the concept; it then makes the transition to *Realphilosophie* and to the language of representation. Truth is first revealed to us by the concrete concept—logic is the first science of the system. It is only after one has learned the language of the gods that the language of representation can be recuperated as true (and no longer misleading) language, and the correspondence between the two names fully displayed. The process runs, for Hegel, the opposite than for Plato.

In the language of speculative logic, for example, terms such as “absolute,” “concept,” and “idea” have a different meaning than when used in religion, in traditional metaphysics, or in ordinary thinking. The language of Hegel’s *Logic* proceeds to the desubstantialization of the metaphysical “Absolute” by showing that absolute is a term that can be used only as attribute and not as substantive. In the present context, my aim is not to discuss Hegel’s thesis regarding the absolute, but to bring to the fore the terms in which this thesis is expressed. In the *Logic*, the Doctrine of Essence shows that the *movement of the (metaphysical) Absolute* is nothing but the *absolute movement* that leads to the Doctrine of the Concept. This is a movement that is *ab-solutus* (and hence “free”) from any dependence on a presupposed Absolute. The ab-soluteness of the “absolute idea,” which concludes the logic of the concept, is its radical freedom. The *Phenomenology of Spirit*, on the other hand, shows that *knowledge of the Absolute* is nothing but “*absolute knowing*”—a thesis that the Logic further supports by bringing it to conclusion in the form of the “*absolute method*” of all being as well as of all cognition.²⁵

With regard to the use of the term *Begriff* in the speculative logic, it is important to underline the fact that, in the “language of the concept” as

opposed to the “language of representation,” the term *Begriff* (as the term “idea”) can only be used *absolutely* in its singular form. Hegel’s *Logic* allows for “the concept” (or “the idea”) but not for the plural form “concepts” or “ideas”—which are always concepts or ideas *of something*—that is, of a content different from the form. When the plural form appears in the *Science of Logic*, it is in reference to traditional formal logic, hence to the nondialectical use of the term. As other terms such as “truth,” “perfection,” and “possibility,” the term “concept” displays a formal and qualitative meaning when used in the singular form and a material and quantitative meaning when used in its plural form. The language of Hegel’s *Logic* employs “concept”—as well as “truth”—exclusively in its formal qualitative meaning. For the structure of the concept is that of a unique monistic totality that does not admit plurality or duplication. It is the structure of the organic totality, that is, the *totum* as opposed to the *compositum*. The only possible duplication is the self-duplication that takes place in the act of (self-)judgment (*Ur-teilung*). With regard to the term “idea,” Hegel explicitly rectifies the speculative use of the term in opposition to its ordinary employment in expressions such as: “these are *only* ideas.” Unlike common understanding or “representation”²⁶ that attributes to ideas (plural) an intrinsic lack of reality and considers them mere figments of the mind, dialectic sees in the speculative “idea” (singular) the concept that is completely real and fully actualized.

(ii) *Bedeutungsverschiebung and Vagueness*

Hegel’s dialectic is the logic of *dynamic* processes. This logic immanently refutes any attempt to a static determination or definition of truth. If according to a famous theorem “the true (*das Wahre*) is the whole,” the central point is that “the whole is nothing other than the essence completing itself *through its development*.”²⁷ Truth finds its expression in the dimension of movement and *Entwicklung* or development. It follows that truth is neither contained in any one of the partial “moments” of the process nor is it expressed by any one of the propositions in which this process is articulated; truth consists in the entire extension of the process of thinking (the whole) insofar as this is expressed by the dynamic movement of successive “transitions” (*Übergänge*). In Hegel’s dialectical logic, truth is not a function of propositions but of the transitions between successive propositions (or discrete logical spheres). The language of contradiction serves Hegel to dissolve the static form of the proposition into the dynamic dimension of thinking’s own movement. The theory of the speculative proposition presented in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* articulates precisely this crucial discovery of dialectic.²⁸ Dialectic defies static definitions of terms and proposes, offering instead dynamic definitions of structures that are successively caught in the process of gaining a meaning by overcoming their inner contradiction.

Hegel's *Logic* begins, programmatically, with the most radical claim of indeterminacy. Such claim is explicitly meant to reject all beginning with an entirely determined Absolute (and hence with a definition thereof). Only the radical "indeterminateness" of the beginning—and consequently the indeterminateness (and vagueness) of all terms or categories that are offered to designate the beginning—can account for the dynamic of a process, namely, for the fact that the beginning is precisely the beginning of an unfolding movement and not a static position from which thinking cannot escape. The radical self-predication with which Hegel expresses his claim concerning the beginning of science can be formulated as follows: the indeterminateness of the beginning is the beginning with "indeterminateness" as such. The linguistic translation of this claim is the nonproposition or the fragment with which the *Science of Logic* begins: "Being, pure being."²⁹ This beginning is, in all respects, the opposite of a definition.

Moreover, dialectic is the logic of *discrete* processes. The argument of the *Logic* unfolds through discrete "spheres" that are set in a relation of logical succession, and ultimately in a circular movement refer back to the absolute indeterminateness of the beginning. What makes the successive spheres of the process discrete, incommensurable, and irreducible structures is the *Übergang* or transition that divides them. The "in-between" represented by each transition sets the conditions for the repetition—and further determination—of the former structure within the following one (as its inner "moment," as it were). The process of transition is a movement of *Aufhebung*, which displaces or shifts a concluded structure onto the higher level represented by its successor, thereby reducing it to "moment" of a more extensive unity of meaning.³⁰ However, taken up as "moment" of a new structure, the previous term shows a new meaning. This is the process that the recent literature has labeled *Bedeutungsverschiebung*: displacement or shift of meaning. To be sure, it is precisely the movement of transition that is responsible for both the determination of the new structure as the new horizon of meaning and for the reduction of the previous structure to "moment" of the new one.

As example of the first case can be offered the relation between "being" and "essence" once the definition of *Wesen* as successor of *Sein* (or as coming *after Sein*) is at issue. This relation is articulated in expressions such as: "essence is the truth of being," "essence is the first negation of being," or "essence is sublated being."³¹ These expressions point to the definition of the new horizon of meaning proper to the new logical sphere. The displacement or shift that characterizes dialectical thinking is evident in the construction: "y is the truth of x" which is proposed both as construction of logical succession and as the form in which truth is predicated. As example of redefinition of the preceding structure once it has been taken up as moment within the following one, we can mention the new status displayed by *Sein* viewed, this

time, as internal moment of *Wesen*. The structure of "*Schein*" in the Logic of Essence is the residual presence of the "sphere of being" in essence.³² *Schein* is the new name that *Sein* gains at the level of essence.

CONCLUSION

The development of the argument of this chapter is meant to provide the theoretical justification for a more extensive project of which my concluding analysis of the language of Hegel's speculative logic gives only a quick sample. Ultimately, I tried to illustrate the intrinsic connection between the language of dialectic and dialectic as method of philosophy. The claim is that given the speculative thesis of the identity of form and content (which Hegel names "absolute form"), the language of dialectic cannot be viewed as the merely external and accidental form of a content that could also be expressed in other ways (for example, in the language of symbolic logic or by way of a series of aphorisms). From this claim it follows that one cannot decide to accept the philosophical content proposed by Hegel and reject the language in which it is expressed (a new version of Friedrich Engels's separation of system and method or, alternatively, of Benedetto Croce's claim regarding "ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto nella filosofia di Hegel"). The condemnation of Hegel's language is the complete rejection of Hegel's dialectic—that is, of his way of doing philosophy.

Ultimately, in this chapter, I propose a reflection on the issue of how to interpret Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's thesis "truth is the whole" forces the interpreter to an approach to his philosophy (and to his language) that must be necessarily comprehensive. We can indeed decide to reject his thought and refuse to speak the language of dialectic. In this case, however, it is our task to teach philosophy a different language. Historically, this is the task that Hegel has left to philosophy post-1831.

NOTES

1. See Hermann J. Cloeren, "The Linguistic Turn in Kierkegaard's Attack on Hegel," *International Studies in Philosophy* 17, 3 (1985): 3–13.

2. William James, "Hegel and His Method," *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition*, ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 512–29, 513.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bände* (=TW), ed. E. Moldenhauer, K. M. Michel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), TW 3:72.

4. See the discussion between W. Becker, "Das Problem der Selbstanwendung im Kategorienvverständnis der dialektischen Logik," *Hegel Studien Beiheft* 18 (1978) and R. Wiehl, "Selbstbeziehung und Selbstanwendung dialektischer Kategorien," *Hegel Studien Beiheft* 18 (1978): 83–113.

5. See A. Nuzzo, "Il problema filosofico della traduzione ed il problema della traduzione filosofica," *Quaderni di traduzione* 28 (1994): 169–93.
6. See, among others, Thomas M. Seebohm, "The Grammar of Hegel's Dialectic," *Hegel Studien* 11 (1976): 149–80; D. Marconi, *Contradiction and Language in Hegel's Dialectic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982).
7. G. W. F. Hegel, 1971, *TW* 3: 85.
8. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1969, 825 (*TW* 6: 550).
9. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 825 (*TW* 6: 550).
10. See *Encyclopedia* (1830), § 25. Remark.
11. William James, 1977, 513.
12. William James, 1977, 516.
13. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 826 (*TW* 6: 551).
14. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 824, 825, 826 (*TW* 6: 549, 551).
15. G. W. F. Hegel, 1971 (*TW* 3: 13).
16. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 826 (*TW* 6: 551–52) (emphasis added).
17. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 825 (*TW* 6: 550).
18. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 824 (*TW* 6: 549).
19. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 57 (*TW* 5: 53).
20. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 35. (*TW* 5: 25).
21. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 35 (*TW* 5: 25).
22. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 825 (*TW* 6: 550).
23. G. W. F. Hegel, 1968ff., *Gesammelte Werke*, hrsg. in Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (=GW). Hamburg, Meiner. *Skeptizismusaufsatz*. GW 4: 207.
24. G. W. F. Hegel, 1971, *Encyclopedia*, *TW* 8: 23–24. A thorough discussion of this topic and of its implications for the methodological relation between *Logic* and *Realphilosophie* can be found in A. Nuzzo, *Rappresentazione e concetto nella logica della Filosofia del diritto di Hegel*. Napoli: Guida, 1990.
25. This topic is further developed in A. Nuzzo, "The Idea of 'Method' in Hegel's Science of Logic—A Method for Finite Thinking and Absolute Knowing," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 39/40 (1999): 1–18; see also A. Nuzzo, "The Truth of 'absolutes Wissen,'" *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. A. Denker (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanities, 2003), 265–94.
26. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 756 f. (*TW* 6: 463). Kant had already drawn attention on the use of this expression—albeit with a different intention.
27. G. W. F. Hegel, 1971, 11 (*TW* 3: 24). (emphasis added).
28. See J. Surber, "Hegel's Speculative Sentence," *Hegel Studien* 10 (1975): 211–30.
29. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 82 (*TW* 5: 82). Since this nonproposition, as it were, does not say anything, the transition to "nothing" is already achieved (linguistically as well).
30. For the notions of "moment" and *Aufhebung* (with regard to the first "moments" appearing in the *Logic*, namely the "Moments of Becoming"), see G. W. F. Hegel, 1969, 105–107 (*TW* 5: 112–13).
31. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969 (*TW* 6:13, 16, 18).
32. G. W. F. Hegel, 1969 (*TW* 6: 19).

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SECTION 2

Language, Subjectivity, and “Objective Truth”

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CHAPTER 4

Objective Language and Scientific Truth in Hegel

Jeffrey Reid

The question of scientific language in Hegel is the following: Given the inherent scientific demands of Hegel's system, how does its language claim to express objective truth? This question must be answered without importing epistemological and linguistic notions foreign to the Hegelian enterprise itself, or, to put it another way, in order to understand this crucial aspect of Hegel we must not import notions of objective truth and discourse alien to his idea of science.

Failure to comprehensively understand the nature of Hegelian scientific language has allowed to go unchallenged a wide-spread misunderstanding regarding the nature of Hegelian objectivity. This misunderstanding can be bluntly summarized as follows. The world itself operates dialectically, obeying an inherently dialectical logic. Many will probably find nothing objectionable in this statement. In fact, it appears readily verifiable with regard to that part of worldly objectivity Hegel deals with on the Spirit side of his philosophy, for example the rise of consciousness and intersubjective relations. Indeed, spirit, as human activity, can easily be said to reflect thought or "mind," which, as the *Logics* tell us, is inherently dialectical. And it is this objectivity or "second nature" that most commentators are interested in.¹ When the natural world itself is brought into consideration, however, there is some embarrassment. It is indeed hard to verify, for example, that cosmological phenomena and chemical reactions operate along strictly dialectical lines. Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* therefore tends to be taken less seriously, or ignored.²

However, even when the inherently dialectical nature of Hegelian objectivity is ascribed solely to the Spirit side of his philosophy, crucial (Kierkegaardian, Marxian) questions arise concerning the coherency of the entire philosophical endeavor. If objectivity itself operates dialectically, what is

the status of the philosopher subject (i.e., Hegel)? Or, more precisely, what is the status of Hegel's scientific discourse? From where does it derive its own objectivity and truth? It should be obvious to readers of Hegel that his scientific discourse cannot claim to simply *represent* or *reflect* objectivity, and garner its own truthfulness and objectivity from the exactness of this representation.³

Such a view could not help but fall within what Hegel refers to as (Kantian) subjective idealism, that is, the representation, whether faithful or not, would never be more than mere appearance (*Schein*), the reflection of Hegel's own self-certainty; the supposed "truth," stemming from personal observations, would, in fact, reflect nothing other than subjective certitude.⁴ In other words, this view contradicts Hegel's explicit rejection of scientific truth based purely on confirmed observation (perception) of empirical, experimental data, which we find reiterated in all his major works and in a good deal of his minor ones.⁵ This does not mean that Hegel discounts empirical science. For example, as I will show, there is a place, or a level, for the representations of the natural sciences within the body of systematic (philosophical, Hegelian) science. However, as we will see, this level of representation only achieves objective truth through a certain notion of discourse essential to this science.

Hegel's repudiation of sense certainty (or sense perception) as an adequate ground for systematic, objective truth must be understood in linguistic terms; sense certainty goes hand in hand with the notion of referential language, with the idea that language refers to, reflects, or denotes an objectivity which is real but somehow removed from the language itself. According to this view, truth and objectivity are entirely based on the exactness of the reflection, on the faithfulness of how sentence tokens signify "reality." Although many commentators understand Hegel's critique of sense perception and its corresponding referential language, they seem unable to break away from the idea of Hegel-empiricist, the lucid and profound observer of the world around him.⁶ I believe this is because they have been unable to grasp the true nature of Hegel's scientific language as nonreferential, where there is no distance between signifier and signified, and where the objectivity of language is not the impoverished objectivity of arbitrary signs.

In dealing with the question of how Hegel sees the truth of his discourse as objective, I therefore want to show that his claim to scientific truth implies a certain grasp of objectivity different from the one summarized above, and a certain notion of language that is not referential and which is constitutive of Hegelian objectivity. More explicitly, I will argue that the Hegelian idea of "Science" supposes a discourse that is not only objectively true but is also, itself, true objectivity.

The use of the term "objectivity" in the preceding paragraphs may cause some consternation. This is because we are accustomed to using the term in two distinct acceptations: (1) in the sense of nonsubjective, nonarbitrary truth; (2) in the sense of a concrete reality existing outside the subject. By saying

that, for Hegel, science is a discourse that is “not only objectively true but is also, itself, true objectivity,” I am purposely conflating the two acceptations. For Hegel, scientific objectivity is nonsubjective truth existing as a concrete reality. I am also saying this reality is discourse, scientific discourse itself.

It is also important to emphasize a point that may, at first, appear redundant, but which is crucial. Scientific discourse, for Hegel, is exclusively that discourse which deals with the objects of science. This clearly implies that there are objects not addressed by science—that is, there is a nonscientific objectivity, and there are discourses which are also nonscientific. However, if we are to take Hegel’s scientific claims seriously, as I am doing, then we must respect this often ignored distinction. All objectivity is not scientific. All discourse is not scientific. The discourse of science does not deal with all objectivity.

Initially, the issue is how scientific discourse can be objectively true, how it can relate to its objects, for example to such worldly manifestations as the state, history, art, religion, and nature without merely reflecting them. According to my argument, these manifestations must somehow be embodied in true scientific discourse as its true, objective content. This idea of *content* that is also the *object* of science is important to grasp. Hegelian science does not study its objects in a detached analytical way, in order to draw conclusions about them and test these conclusions against empirical data. Hegelian science claims to hold within itself, as content, the objects of its discourse. Or, science is no more than the ultimate articulation of its objects/contents. Hegel expresses the richness of this content by using the term *Gehalt*, rather than *Inhalt*. To use a vulgar example, the former term might apply in stating, “milk is content-rich in vitamins and calcium,” while the latter might describe the contents of a suitcase. As *Gehalt*, content should be seen as essential to what it makes up.

There is no mystery about what the *Gehalt*-objects of science are; they can be found in the “Table of Contents” of the *Encyclopedia*. This content, like scientific truth itself, is *essentially* text, not the inherently meaningless natural occurrences of disengaged objectivity, but meaningful discourse. In other words, I am arguing that scientific discourse derives its truth and objectivity from its contents, which are themselves grasped as true and objective discourse. In order to understand the objectivity and truth of scientific discourse (and its contents), I am therefore proposing a certain linguistic notion that I believe is found in Hegel: language that does not simply reflect what is otherwise “real,” language that does not *refer* to its object, but rather language that actually *is* its object (and content) and is therefore objective and true. The word is truly the thing, but not in the sense of *das Ding*, a common, indeterminate, natural object in a sea of contingency, but rather in the sense of *die Sache*, a more meaningful, content-rich existence. How is this content-rich language possible?

Whether we question a modern-day theoretical physicist or an eighteenth-century empiricist, his or her definition of objective truth in science will involve the adequation of thought and being, of concepts and experience. For example, a subjective theory (thought) takes on objective truth when it can be adequated to reality (being). The adequation of thought and being also lies at the heart of the Hegelian scientific endeavor. However, according to the notion of Hegelian scientific objectivity I am proposing, the adequation of thought and being is *realized* in language, in a language which can therefore be grasped as truth and “objectivity,” in both senses of the word; namely, language that is not based on subjective representation and language which is itself a real object or thing (*Sache*) that is both thought and being.⁷ This language occurs in several different contexts, and each of these expressions forms specific, objective content for science. The total content of science thus appears as the true and objective discourses of natural science, subjective and objective spirit, art, and religion. This is another way of saying that the Hegelian project, consisting of finding true objectivity in the meeting between (natural) being and the dialectical or negating activity of thought takes place, on the highest scientific or systematic level, in the articulation itself of the *Encyclopedia*. The first part of the work, “The Science of Logic” (thought), and the second, the “Philosophy of Nature” (being), find their truth in the third part, the “Philosophy of Spirit,” whose last word is precisely “Philosophy”—that is, philosophical discourse itself.

I. THE OBJECTIVE CONTENT AS THE WORD

A brief passage from the *Encyclopedia*’s “Philosophy of Spirit” helps us understand more precisely the linguistic notion we are dealing with, namely a language that is to be taken as true objectivity, as the realization of thought and being. Here, scientific language is presented as the objective result of a meeting between representing intelligence (thought) and the mere linguistic sign, or “name.” As Hegel puts it: “The being (*Seiende*), as name (*Name*), needs an other, meaning from the representing (*vorstellenden*) intelligence, in order to be the thing (*Sache*), true objectivity.”⁸

This reference describes scientific discourse at its most formal level, in the context of subjective spirit, where content is supplied by representing intelligence, by understanding. John McCumber’s insightful and detailed analysis of this section of the *Encyclopedia* (paragraphs 451–64) explores Hegel’s use of the “name” as linguistic “sign” and reveals its entirely natural and singular objectivity.⁹ The “name” or sign that is to be inhabited by representational content should be understood as an arbitrary, empty, naturally formed being, open to any “meaning,” just as a certain given name can apply indiscriminately to any individual person.¹⁰ The name, as a singular, naturally formed thing (*Ding*)

must indeed be understood as simply found-there by representing intelligence. Here, we are operating at the level of sense-certainty as it is expressed in the *Encyclopedia*, where denomination can never reach beyond the singular appellation of individual objects, where every object has its name and only its name, which, like the object referred to, is simply found there ready-made, without having been, as McCumber puts it, “worked up by intelligence.”¹¹ The ambiguity McCumber refers to between “names as such” and “representational names” can be largely lifted by applying the term “name” to only the senseless externality of the mere, meaningless, arbitrary “sign,” as a being simply found-there and as yet divorced from any signification; the term “word” should be retained to denote the “representational name”—that is, the formerly senseless “sign” that is now filled, by intelligence, with the content of representation.¹² In other words, a “name” is not yet a “word.”

This distinction between “name” and “word” can be born out to some degree by Hegel’s statement, in *Encyclopedia* § 463, that “names as such” are “senseless words.” This indeed seems to imply that (significant) words are something other than empty, contingent, naturally formed names.¹³ Words, or “representational names” as McCumber calls them, are richer in content (*Gehalt*) than the empty “names as such” we began with. Intelligence has supplied the latter with representational content and the result is in the order of “true objectivity,” what Hegel is calling *die Sache* as opposed to *das Ding*.

The point I am making is that “the thing (*Sache*), true objectivity” is still language. It is simply a language which has greater truth and objectivity than the mere empty signs we began with, because now the form of language has taken on content.

It is also crucial to understand that in the passage from the name to the word, we move through two orders of objectivity, from nature to “second nature,” from natural, contingent, impoverished objectivity, to the “true objectivity” of the scientific word. Although this level of objectivity and truth is still relative, in that its content is still representational and therefore still somewhat subjective, it is nonetheless higher than the arbitrary objectivity of the natural world, which can itself be seen as nothing more than an infinite number of meaningless “signs” which are only *potentially* significant. Far from being truly objective, this world of immediate sense-certainty reflects, in fact, the most radical form of subjectivity. Sense-certainty is a form of *self-certainty*.¹⁴

Even at the level of discourse we are currently dealing with in the paragraphs of the *Encyclopedia* under discussion, viz. representational discourse *within* the scientific system, representing intelligence fills the mere “name” to form a significant *word* that should be taken as itself incarnating a certain degree of both objectivity and truth. This scientifically meaningful word is what Hegel is calling “the thing (*die Sache*), true objectivity.”¹⁵ Within the *Encyclopedia* system, the representations expressed in the words of science

should then be taken as more than purely natural or purely subjective and arbitrary; they are determined scientific representations that arise, for example, within the natural sciences and which must be subsequently incorporated into the overall system of science. In other words, the representations expressed in the words of science must themselves become part of the total content of philosophical science. In the "Philosophy of Nature," this language obtains in the numerous examples Hegel cites from the natural sciences of his day. For the natural, empirical sciences to become part of the system, their own discourse must be seen as already content-ful and objectively true, although still representational.¹⁶ The above-defined "word" enables us to understand how this is possible. Representing intelligence penetrates nature, as it invests itself in the completely natural names (empty signs) found already there, to produce meaningful words. In fact, that is all representing intelligence can appropriately carry out. Now, however, within Hegelian science, the subsequent pronouncements of representing intelligence can be taken as objectively true, where objectivity and truth are no longer based on the reflection between (natural) "objectivity" on one hand and language on the other.¹⁷

Although in the context of theoretical intelligence, where the discussion on the "name" arises, we are not yet dealing with systematic philosophical discourse as such, Hegel is telling us that representational discourse, as it arises *within the system*, already possesses a certain degree of true objectivity and objective truth. As the realized result of thought (representing intelligence) and being (the "name"), it is truer and more objective than either, or rather, it combines the hard, natural reality of the name with the abstract essentiality of thought to form something that is truly objective and essential.

Thus, the scientifically significant word appears as the "middle term" between thought and being. It is a particular being which is at the same time thought, or vice versa.¹⁸

II. FROM PREDICATION TO THE SYLLOGISM

The expression "middle term" introduces my contention that an analysis of the act of predication or judgment alone is not sufficient to grasp Hegel's concept of scientifically objective discourse; to do so, one must look beyond the proposition, to the syllogism, and consider it as a grammatical extension of the act of predication. Failure to do so leads one to concentrate on the relationship between language and thought rather than on the more fundamental relation between being and thought. Failing to grasp language as the objective middle term embodying the two extremes, leaves it external to both thought and being. As such, it can do no more than reflect either thought or being, but never actually *be* them. It is only by doing so that language, in Hegel, can be considered scientifically objective.

In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel deals with the question of how the subject-predicate form can be grasped as dialectical, in terms of what he refers to as the “speculative sentence.”¹⁹ Jere Surber, in his valuable analysis of this passage, explains that the grammatical subject is to be understood as consciousness losing itself in its predicate, which in turn “recoils” back onto the subject in search of a ground. The grammatical subject can thus be seen as an empty name receiving content from its predicate, or as conscious thought determining itself through predication. In both cases, however, the issue is “the dialectical structure of the proposition” and how the speculative sentence “reflects the fact that, for Hegel, consciousness itself is essentially a dialectical activity.”²⁰ This seems to show that considering the act of predication in terms of its “dialectical activity” can do no more than provide us with a reflection, where language can provide only an (arbitrary) analogy of thought.

Surber himself brings out the arbitrary nature of this dualism between language and thought when he writes, “The same sentence [i.e., the mere sentence-token] becomes speculative by virtue of the very manner in which we comprehend and reflect upon it.”²¹ In other words, if we consider philosophical language as no more than an accurate reflection of thought, truth comes to depend entirely on the external, and arbitrary judgments of a judicious (yet subjective) “we.” John McCumber encounters the same problem. When scientific language is not seen as the objective middle term between being and thought, meaning (the relation between thought and language) becomes the arbitrary result of public judgment, understood here as a linguistic community of shared reference, à la Wittgenstein. McCumber writes, “[F]or Wittgenstein, then (and for Hegel), meaning is intrinsically public.”²² According to my argument, the objective truth of scientific discourse in Hegel depends on neither the insightfulness of individual readers/listeners, nor upon general public consensus.²³

Objective truth remains extremely problematical when a reflective distance is maintained between the language of science and thought, when the relation between the two is merely analogous. In Hegel, this problem arises when scientific discourse is examined *only* in terms of the predicative sentence, even when this is understood speculatively or dialectically. Commentators concentrating on the *Phenomenology* as the main area of research in their investigations into Hegel’s “philosophy of language” are necessarily confined to examining the dialectical workings of the predicative statement. Scientific truth is thus construed as the accurate reflection or adequation between this language (dialectical) and thought (dialectical). This reinforces the misunderstanding I invoked earlier: in order for commentators to discover truth in the relationship between language and the *world*, the latter must also be seen as *inherently* dialectical and thus reflected in dialectical language.

In fact, the scientific inadequacies of the propositional act of predication are revealed through Hegel’s later writings on judgment, particularly as they

appear in the *Greater Logic*.²⁴ More specifically, if scientific discourse does indeed imply a notion of objective truth dependent upon meaningful content (*Gehalt*), then the predicative (judgment) form seems inadequate precisely in terms of its inability to hold any content beyond that which is subjectively representational. Although supporting such a hypothesis outreaches the scope of this chapter, it seems an argument can be made that Hegel's evaluation of the predicative form, or the form of judgment, undergoes a depreciation over time. From his dialectical or speculative investigations into the copula,²⁵ which lead to his analysis of the speculative sentence in the preface of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel comes to see the syllogism as a more appropriate grammatical form in which to grasp scientific expression.²⁶

This is born out by the fact that much of the *Phenomenology*'s "speculative sentence" analysis is taken up again in the *Greater Logic*, however in a context where judgment (predication) appears as the transitional moment between the concept, as an original, immediate, that is, still unmediated whole, and the fully developed syllogism, which articulates moments of the universal, the particular, and the singular. In fact, Hegel understands judgment "etymologically" as an *Ur-teilen*, the original dividing necessary for the concept to be able to reunite itself, but now syllogistically mediated. Thus, "judgment is the dividing of the concept by itself."²⁷

Defining predication in terms of division leaves little room for content, and in the *Greater Logic* Hegel deals specifically with this problem. Real content can neither be held in the subject nor the predicate, which are related in a purely arbitrary and, in fact, subjective fashion.²⁸ "The subject can find itself taken, with regard to the predicate, as the singular with regard to the universal, or again as the particular with regard to the universal, or as the singular with regard to the particular."²⁹ Consequently, subject and predicate are once again taken as no more than names, empty markers or, continues Hegel in the same passage, "something undetermined that must still obtain its determination." Hegel's speculative solution in the *Greater Logic* is to maintain that this determination takes place in neither the subject nor the predicate but in the copula which must become the "filled and determined unity of the subject and the predicate, as their concept."³⁰ When the copula is understood in this way, as an existing unity underlying both subject and predicate, the judgment "passes into" the syllogism.³¹

I am insisting on this passage between judgment (predication) and syllogism in order to reinforce my argument about the nature of scientific discourse in Hegel, as language that must be grasped as objective, true, and content-ful (i.e., "filled and determined"), as discourse that must be understood as the existing "middle term" between thought and being, or between subject and predicate. It is this same middle term I invoked above as the significant word in scientific discourse, which Hegel refers to as "the thing [*die Sache*]" or "true objectivity."³² Hegel's analysis of the syllogism should be understood as the

"elenchus" of his grammatical analysis of the predicative form. The syllogism expresses the true destiny of the copula, as a mediating, content-ful middle term that determines the two extremes (subject and predicate) in such a way that the whole proposition becomes an objective concept. This is what he means when, referring to the syllogism of necessity, he writes, "In that this syllogism determines the extremes of the concept precisely as totalities, the syllogism has attained . . . its truth, and has thus passed from subjectivity into objectivity."³³

Considering the syllogism as the conceptual development of predication allows us to grasp the systematic (scientific) implications of Hegelian language, as presented in that system called the *Encyclopedia*, and to see how Hegel's notion of objectively true discourse implies a language capable of embodying meaningful content (*Gehalt*). A discussion of Hegel's notion of scientific language therefore requires an analysis that goes beyond the formal linguistic dimension. This emphasis on content rather than form runs generally counter to how linguistic analysis is understood today. I want to look at a specific instance of how Hegelian scientific discourse can be said to hold objective content.

III. OBJECTIVE SPIRIT AS SCIENTIFIC CONTENT

The specific content of Hegelian science I want to look at is private property, the first element of what appears as Objective Spirit or the State in the *Encyclopedia*. In dealing with this issue (*Sache*), I am obviously not attempting to exhaust it as a question but merely trying to show how it can be seen to form the objective content of scientific language, content that renders scientific language itself objective, without this objectivity depending upon truth defined as the external adequation between signified and signifier. Property, like any other content of science, must then be conceived as a language that is the objective middle term between being and thought. "Property" is particularly revealing in this light since its objectivity, whether we refer to a house, a field, or a horse, strikes us as completely natural and "objective." In fact, it is precisely because of this natural, immediate aspect that the thing (*Ding*) of property cannot, as such, become part of scientific discourse. The natural thing has not been mediated (or negated) by thought. We have to see how the discourse of property is more objective than property itself, understood as a simple, natural thing (*Ding*).

Concerning property, Hegel's insight is that it is not truly objective until it passes from one individual will to another. The meaning of this "passing" is neither in the subjective affirmation of possession, in declaring in a purely predicative way that "this is mine," nor in the simple names or linguistic signs that immediately represent or reflect this bit of earth, the house, and so forth. These signs are as natural and impoverished as the things (*Dingen*) they

reflect. The scientific meaning of property, its true objectivity, the fact that it can become a thing in the sense of *Sache*, is only manifest when it is transferred (sold and bought) from one will to another. This meaning manifests itself in the language of the contract.³⁴

Hegel writes: "The interiority of the will that surrenders the property and of the will that receives it is in the realm of representation, and the word is, in this realm, act and thing [*Sache*]."³⁵

The contract must be grasped as a language having an objective existence, both "substantial" and true.³⁶ This truth is the following: The essence of property is to pass from one will to another; this essence is manifested in the real words of the contract. Thus we grasp concretely the meaning of the Hegelian idea that essence (*das Wesen*) can be thought of as being that has been (*gewesen*).³⁷ Only insofar as the purely natural being disappears (is negated or mediated) in the passage from one will to another can essence emerge. However, rather than dissipating in a "formless tumult of church bells or the warm rising of vapours,"³⁸ the essence of property is objectified in contractual language, understood as the middle term of a syllogism whose two extremes are natural being and thought (here, in the form of will).

That the written, consensual contract is a more truly objective representation of property and possession than my simple predication of something as "mine" is understandable.³⁹ When property changes hands, it does so on paper and in writing. Its possession only thereby becomes something objective, "substantial," and of "value."⁴⁰ It is this objectivity that enables property to be recognized by the persons involved as well as by others, and thereby to effectively participate in the social space of *Sittlichkeit*.⁴¹ I believe the same point of view can be said to apply to other fundamentally linguistic expressions of content within objective spirit: laws, constitutions,⁴² and even world history.⁴³

It is important to understand what I am arguing here. I am not saying that objective spirit is nothing but text. I am saying that objective spirit must already be objectively true language for it to be part of scientific discourse. Or, from another point of view, for scientific discourse to be objectively true and truly objective, its content must also be objectively true and truly objective. The content of science (which is itself discourse) is language understood as itself content-ful—that is, as the existing middle term between being and thought. So, if Hegel's science is to incorporate such objective expressions as private property, justice, the state, and world history, these expressions must be grasped as text which is, at least to a certain degree, objectively true/truly objective; philosophical science does not observe natural events, it reads texts.⁴⁴ These are considered truer and more objective than what we might be tempted to call the immediate "real" world, which, for Hegel, is merely natural and undetermined, and therefore less real than the world as penetrated (determined) by thought and manifest in meaningful language.

Objective spirit forms one of the main contents of science. Although I cannot go into this further, here, I believe the other objects/contents of the *Encyclopedia* should also be seen as objective discourse: the Philosophy of Nature,⁴⁵ the contents of Subjective Spirit,⁴⁶ Art,⁴⁷ Religion,⁴⁸ and of course, Science itself. In fact, Science is nothing more than the systematic, speculative articulation of its contents, of its objects, namely the discourses I have mentioned. Science *thinks* the objective truth (or the true objectivity) of its own contents and knows itself to be true and objective. This knowledge is the existing discourse of science; it is *logos*.

IV. THE ACTUALITY OF SCIENCE

The idea of true objectivity as essentially linguistic may seem rather bloodless and two-dimensional, in that it appears to reduce worldly richness to the words on a page. However, such an objection is based on a notion of language other than the one I have been presenting as Hegel's.

Hegel never denies the world's richness and we know he enjoyed an enviable social life beyond the sphere of academe. But we must distinguish between scientific objectivity and the world in general. Science deals solely with scientific objects. We are not talking about Krug's pen⁴⁹ or any other arbitrary, singular, natural object. Scientific objects are the contents of science. Their names can be found in the *Encyclopedia's* table of contents.

As objective, they also exist in the world. The objectivity of the contract means that it can be read and recognized by individual wills within the State as *Sittlichkeit*. Similarly, the laws of the city and the constitution itself are *lived* by the citizens, whether litigiously or not. On another level, "international public law"⁵⁰ determines, to some extent, the reciprocal activity of states between themselves and world history is read as the discourse of the discourses of history. In the same way, the linguistic expressions of art and religion *participate* in the life of the city. It is important to recall, however, that it is not because these discourses participate in the world that they are objective, but rather the contrary: it is because these discourses are objective and true that they must manifest themselves as actual (*wirklich*).

What about the actuality of philosophical discourse as such, of the *Encyclopedia* and the other Hegelian writings? Beyond any worldly participation of its contents, what actuality might scientific *logos* itself have within the city? A plausible response may be found by simply recalling that Hegel spent almost his entire adult life teaching and that almost all of his texts were conceived as teaching manuals used within the state's education system. So perhaps we can say that the actuality of scientific discourse itself, as objectively true *logos*, can be found in its pedagogical application.

NOTES

1. See Adriaan Peperzak's astute article "Second Nature: Place and Significance of Objective Spirit in Hegel's Encyclopedia," *Owl of Minerva* 27, 1 (Fall 1995): 51–66.

2. This is particularly true with overviews of Hegel's philosophy. Two examples: Charles Taylor's book on Hegel contains only ten pages on the philosophy of nature; none of the fourteen contributions making up *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), deals directly with the philosophy of nature. Recently, there has been new interest in this area. See Stephen Houlgate, ed., *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

3. Engels provides a model expression of this misconception. "[Dialectical philosophy] reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away; of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher. And dialectical philosophy itself is nothing more than the mere reflection of this process in the thinking brain." *Ludwig Feuerbach* (New York: International, 1941): 12. For a succinct contemporary expression of this misconception, see Alison Stone, "Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Overcoming the Division between Matter and Thought," *Dialogue* 39, 4: 725–43. The author claims to discover a "theory" of nature "according to which nature progresses in a rationally necessary series of stages from an initial division between its two constituent elements, thought and matter, to their eventual unification." The author proceeds to show this progression through "an extended comparison between the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Spirit" (pp. 725–26). I am arguing that if objectivity, whether natural or human, moves according to such a progression, it is *because it has been invested with thought* and thought is dialectical; i.e., it moves from original unity, through separation (*Urteilen*) to reconciliation. In Hegel, pure, undigested, prenegated nature does not move on its own accord. Indeed, it is unmoving, lifeless and dead.

4. For example: "[Hegel] expressed his thought in the sounds and inscriptions of the German language, to which he assigned his own, philosophically constructed meanings." Very few Hegelian readers would disagree with this statement, yet it reduces the objectivity of Hegel's scientific discourse to personal pronouncements of "his own . . . constructed meanings." John McCumber, *The Company of Words, Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

5. For example, in *Glauben und Wissen*, Hegel sees the influence of Locke and Hume as having mired Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte in the realm of "finitude and subjectivity." *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 2, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 376–77.

6. Daniel Cook, in reviewing David Lamb's book *Language and Perception in Hegel and Wittgenstein*, agrees that both Hegel and Wittgenstein argue against the empirical account of the relationship between language and reality, and the resultant "atomic facts." However, both commentators share the belief that we can still "make sense of our sense experience" through "certain contextual relations." *Owl of Minerva* 14, 2 (December 1982): 2–3. In her article "Can Hegel Refer to Particulars," *Owl of Minerva* 17, 2 (Spring 1986): 181–94, Katherina Dulckeit also sees sense certainty in the *Phenomenology* as a thesis about linguistic reference. In doing so, the author does

not make the distinction I am making between referential, reflective language in general and the language of science.

7. Frank Schalow, in his article "The Question of Being and the Recovery of Language within Hegelian Thought," *Owl of Minerva* 24, 2 (Spring 1993): 163–80, writes: "In an amorphous way, Hegel [like Kant] formulated the problem of the relation between being and thought, but not so decisively as to view language as having an even greater importance in forming an essential link between the two" (p. 164). I am arguing that the language of science is precisely that: the essential embodiment of being and thought. For Schalow, language can only reflect or "make visible" the mediation between thought and being. The relation between objective truth and language thus remains referential and ultimately, according to Hegel, subjective. "Through its own activity, language makes visible the mediation of opposites, and thereby exemplifies the form of determinateness essential to thought" (p. 165). In other words, scientific language remains merely analogous to truth itself (the union of thought and being). In fact, as early as 1802, in *Glauben und Wissen*, Hegel defines the discourse of Reason as that in which subject and predicate express the identity of thought and being. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 2, 304.

8. *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* § 464. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 282.

9. See McCumber 1993, 220–38.

10. "[N]ames as such [are] *external, senseless entities*, which only have significance as *signs*." *Encyclopedia*, "Philosophy of Spirit" § 459. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 274. In this paragraph, Hegel argues against the Herderian notion of words, as natural objects, having some inherent sense, i.e., that they stem from primitive reproductions of natural sounds. For Hegel, purely natural entities have no inherent sense. Even though they may be formed by the interplay of natural causes and effects, they remain, in themselves, arbitrary. They are meaningless "names" or empty signs waiting to be signified by intelligence. This also explains Hegel's argument against phrenology, in the *Phenomenology*. Skulls, as purely natural entities, do not express some inherent meaning, which need only be deciphered.

11. McCumber 1993, 223.

12. McCumber uses the term "sign" as something signifying. I am using it as a synonym for "name," a mere, empty token waiting to be invested with meaning or *Gehalt*. As such, it is still insignificant.

13. The 1817 version of this paragraph included the sentence, "Names, there are many of them, and, as such, they are contingent names with regard to one another." The contingency of the actual sign, divorced from any signification, simply means that "lion" for example, could well have evolved to be written and pronounced otherwise, as "leo" for example, just as I personally might have been *named* "Gregory" instead of "Jeffrey," which could also have been spelled "Geoffrey."

14. "Sense certainty, then, though indeed expelled from the object, is not yet thereby overcome, but only driven back into the 'I.'" *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), § 100. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 3, 86.

15. This, then, is why the thing (*Sache*) appears, in the "Doctrine of Essence," under the heading "The Thing's Emergence into Existence" and why James Wilkenson's proposed translation of *die Sache* as "engendering," though somewhat awkward, does make sense. See James Wilkenson, "On Translating *Sache* in Hegel's Texts: A Response," *Owl of Minerva* 27, 2 (Spring 1996): 211–30.

16. For Hegel, there is no (universal) philosophical science without the particular sciences as content. Thus, in his letter/report to von Raumer on education, he complains that “the materials of the particular sciences have not yet attained their reorganization and adoption into the new idea” (*Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 4, 419). Hegel sees the particular, positive sciences as a (written) canon of work to be first learned and assimilated, and then reconsidered conceptually. “This content of understanding, this systematic mass of abstract concepts [i.e., predicative statements] rich in significance [*gehaltvoller Begriffe*] are immediately the stuff of Philosophy.” Report to Niethammer on education, *ibid.*, 414. This content, reworked dialectically, is how Hegel defines science: “The content grasped conceptually [*Das Begriffene*] is alone what is philosophical [as it is present] in the form of the Concept” (*ibid.*, 415). The scientific whole is “only grasped through the elaboration of the parts.” Letter/report to von Raumer, *ibid.*, 420.

17. More importantly, the concept of the content-rich, scientific word enables us to understand how, for Hegel, formally common language, with its (almost) everyday vocabulary and predication-based grammar can ultimately attain to an expression of *logos* in its deepest, richest meanings: as the word of science, as reason and reality, and as the Word of God. It can do so because it is capable of embodying thought and being, and thereby embracing true, objective content and becoming, itself, true objectivity. On how Hegel may have found inspiration for such an idea of *logos* in Hamann, see John McCumber, “Hegel and Hamann: Ideas and Life,” in *Hegel and the Tradition: Essays in Honour of H. S. Harris*, ed. Michael Baur and John Russon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

18. See *Encyclopedia* § 491. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol.10, 307.

19. See *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 3, 59–62.

20. Jere Paul Surber, “Hegel’s Speculative Sentence,” in *Hegel-Studien* 10 (1975): 222.

21. Surber, 1975, 228.

22. McCumber, 1993, 260. See also Cook 1982, 2.

23. For Hegel, philosophical discourse is university discourse, and not destined for public consumption. See his critique of K. W. F. Solger in this regard. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 11, 266–71.

24. See *Doctrine of the Concept*, section I, chapters 2, 3.

25. Discussion of the copula arises in a Kantian context (in Hegel’s *Faith and Knowing*) and can be seen as a reaction to Kant’s belittling of the copula in his dismissal of the ontological argument, in the first *Critique*. Hegel’s discussions of the copula can only be understood with further reference to Fichte’s “I am I,” to Hölderlin’s thoughts on judgment, *Sämtliche Werke* vol. 4 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1962, 226–27), and to Schelling’s philosophy of identity. Perhaps Hegel’s earliest thoughts on the speculative nature of judgment and the copula are found in the Frankfurt fragment, ed. Nohl, “Glauben ist die Art . . .” *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907), 382–85.

26. See *Wissenschaft der Logik, Das Sein*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Gawoll (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986), 54. “The proposition (*Satz*) is in no way immediately suited to express speculative truths.”

27. *Logic, Doctrine of the Concept* (*Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 6, 304). This understanding of judgment as an “original dividing” is explicitly stated and referred to as an “Ur-Teilung” in Hölderlin’s short text cited above.

28. Surber points out how Hegel asks us to accept “subject” in both its grammatical sense and as individual consciousness. (Surber, 1975, 214–15) Again, I refer to the Hölderlin text cited above, apparently written in the Frankfurt period, when he and Hegel were reunited. Here, Hölderlin describes judgment as the original separation that makes “subject and object possible,” thus conflating the grammatical and “consciousness” senses of the subject. In fact, in Hegel’s later, polemical writings, judgment or predication becomes increasingly associated with the pronouncements of individual (ironic) subjectivity in its position against scientific objectivity, thus referring judgment to Fichte’s “I am I,” as indeed Hölderlin does but on a different scale. See also Hegel’s “Review of Solger’s Posthumous Writings and Correspondence,” where Hegel deals with Friedrich Schlegel, where the language of judgment is seen as operating, as irony, against objectivity. “Judging is a decidedly negative tendency against objectivity. . . . Such judgments do not take contents into account, but rather vacuous representations that reject the thing [*Sache*] of religions and philosophies.” *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 11, 233. The ironic assault on true objectivity is effectuated through an evacuation of content from meaningful, scientific language. Briefly put, the “word,” as the very foundation of that discourse, is sapped of its thought-content and relegated to the status of the always arbitrary “name.” Ironic discourse sunders being and thought. For further discussion, see my introduction to *Hegel—L’ironie romantique* (Paris: Vrin, 1997), an annotated translation of Hegel’s review of Solger’s writings.

29. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 6, 302

30. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 309)

31. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 310)

32. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 282

33. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 6, 354

34. This is why the thing (*Sache*) appears, in the *Logic’s Doctrine of Essence*, under the title “The thing’s emergence into existence.” *Die Sache* should be understood as the objective manifestation of essence. I am arguing for its linguistic nature in Hegel.

35. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 308

36. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 308

37. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 6, 13

38. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 3, 169

39. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 307

40. *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 10, 309

41. I will deal with this crucial “performative” or actual aspect of scientific language below. For now, it is important to understand that ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) can only constitute an object (a content) for science in terms of what I have been describing as content-ful language. Discussions on Habermasian language-based ethics and their opposition to Hegelian intersubjectivity should be reexamined in this light. Obviously, my account of Hegel’s scientific language implies this opposition is largely unfounded, since it seems based on “Habermas’s attention to the linguistic dimension of . . . autonomy, and Hegel’s neglect of that dimension,” as Pippin summarizes the problem in *Idealism as Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 180. I want to stress, however, that the linguistic dimension I am referring to is language as it pertains to the objects (contents) of science. This most emphatically does not mean conversation or the exchange of personal opinions. In terms of intersubjectivity, it might well mean mutual recognition through mutually recognized text.

42. Shlomo Avineri points out how the expression “what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational” (which is another way of expressing the conjunction of thought and being) first appears in Hegel’s Heidelberg lectures (1817–1818) in the context of the (written) constitution. Avineri quotes Hegel: “What is rational must happen (*muss geschehen*) since the constitution is after all its development,” *Owl of Minerva* 16, 2 (Spring 1985): 203.

43. As Hegel maintains in paragraph 549 of the *Encyclopedia*, history is essentially historiography, the objective, yet still formal expressions of which are: (1) original and (2) reflective. History itself becomes *rational* (i.e., dialectical) only in that it is then understood and expressed speculatively in the philosophy of history. This view is obviously at odds with the interpretation of Hegelian objectivity I am arguing against, which holds history (as historical events) to be, in itself, dialectical. Marx understood this difference better than many have done since.

44. This reflects a deeply personal penchant of Hegel’s, who was, by all accounts, a voracious and methodical reader from his very youth. Hegel’s predilection for nature in its digested, determined form is also reflected in his account of his youthful trip to the Alps, where his primary interest seems to have been in finding locations whose descriptions he had previously read.

45. See Burbidge, John, “Hegel on Galvanism,” in *Hegel on the Modern World*, ed. Ardis B. Collins (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 111–24. The article shows how Hegel relies on the writings of his time in order to develop the theory of galvanism we find in paragraph 330 of the *Encyclopedia*. Burbidge also shows how Hegel, in choosing his scientific contents prefers those where the form of speculative thought is most apparent. The article by Alison Stone, cited above, which argues for a Hegelian “theory” of nature, must necessarily misunderstand the importance of objective content in Hegel’s science. Indeed, Stone attributes much of the difficulty of the *Philosophy of Nature* to the fact that Hegel’s arguments are “submerged amidst [his] lengthy discussions of now-unfamiliar works.” Stone, 2000, 725.

46. For example, Hegel’s numerous references to the literature of his day, in his lengthy discussion of mental illness, in the addition to *Encyclopedia* § 406.

47. The word has a particularly elevated status in Hegel’s aesthetics. “The object corresponding to [poetry] is the infinite sphere of spirit”; thus the word is “that most constructive material [*bildsamste Material*], which immediately hears spirit and is most capable of grasping its interests and movements into its inner liveliness.” *Lectures on Aesthetics, Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 15, 239.

48. “[T]he true content of religion is first present to the mind in words and letters . . . in words and writings.” Preface to Hinrichs *Philosophy of Religion, Werke in 20 Bänden* vol. 11, 44. Hegel’s position is radically opposed to Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics, for whom “all sacred writing is a mausoleum for religion.” First edition of *Discourses on Religion, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* I.2, ed. Peiter, Birkner et al. (New York, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 242.

49. Hegel’s 1802 polemical essay against the philosopher Krug, who had asked speculative philosophers to deduce his pen, shows that philosophy does not deal with individual “natural” objects.

50. *Philosophy of Right* § 330.

CHAPTER 5

Sound—Tone—Word: Toward an Hegelian Philosophy of Language

John McCumber

INTRODUCTION

How could language *not* have been important to Hegel? Kant's ability not to notice things once he had consigned them to the "merely empirical realm" certainly extended to language, which receives no focal treatment in his thought; but Hegel is not thus dismissive. He zealously tracks down, in his System, the internal structure of mollusks (*Enz.* § 370 *Zus.*).¹ He enthusiastically contrasts the rock crystals of Madagascar with those of Iceland (*Enz.* § 315 *Anm.*). And—more revealingly—in 1828 he writes a seventy-five-page appreciation of the redoubtable *Sprachdenker*, J. G. Hamann.²

Hegel knew, moreover, that the Greek word *logos* meant both "reason" and "language," and found this ambiguity *schön*; someone as concerned with reason as Hegel was should also have been concerned with language. And of course he was. As early as the Jena writings, language is "the power which posits the inner as a being [which in turn is] the being of Spirit as Spirit." And as late as the spoken *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, language is "the pure existence of Spirit; it is a thing which has returned to itself as perceived."³

Such passing encomia to language are hard to miss in Hegel's writings—consider the *Phenomenology's* section on "The Living Work of Art," where language is "the perfect element in which inwardness is just as external as externality is inward."⁴ Inwardness/externality, important though it is for Hegel, is not the only opposition to be reconciled by language. For language is the "deed [*Tat*] of theoretical intelligence,"⁵ thus uniting theoretical with practical—a project that took Kant, who made no argumentative appeals to language, the entire Third *Critique* to achieve.

Indeed, an argument can be made that language is not only, like mollusks and crystals, an important aspect of the world which needs philosophical comprehension, but essential to philosophy itself—that Hegel’s philosophy is and can only be philosophy of language.

The argument begins with the well-known Hegelian claim that, genuine, philosophical thinking “is at home with itself, it relates itself to itself, and is its own object” (*Enz.* § 28 *Zus.*). Hegel reiterates this often, and drives it home by ending his *Encyclopedia* with a quote from Aristotle to the effect that the life of God is the self-thinking of reason—a point Aristotle goes on to sum up by saying that the life of God is “thinking on thinking” (*noêsis noêsis*).⁶ Philosophy for Hegel should be an entirely immanent discourse, one which develops on its own with no reference to outside realities of any kind.

If we take this claim of immanence seriously, then we cannot view Hegel’s System as some sort of rationalized theology, in the sense that God would be somewhere outside it—for God, if He is thinking on thinking, is just the System itself, and as such is—like Aristotle’s Prime Mover—the *telos* (but not, it appears, the Creator) of the world.

But if Hegel’s System as a whole is to be purely immanent, its parts—the determinations of thought which it progressively develops and dialectically transcends—must also be immanent to Hegel’s discourse. They cannot be categories of some wider form of thought which, even if only in our thinking, preexist the System and are merely comprehended and dissected by it. They must be both created by it and unique to it.⁷

How Hegel’s system, if true to this degree of immanence, can relate to anything at all is an obvious problem here, but one that is ulterior to the argument I am stating.⁸ That argument states that if Hegel’s claim of immanence is to be taken seriously, then the System can be “about” only thought itself and what is intrinsic to thought. And language, alone of realities, is capable of being thus intrinsic:

Words [are] thus a determinate being animated by thought. This determinate being is absolutely necessary to our thought. We only know about our thoughts, only have determinate, actual thoughts, when we give them the shape of objectivity, of being distinguished from our interiority, and so give them the form of externality, and indeed of such an externality as carries the stamp of the highest internality. Only the word is such an internal externality. (*Enz.* § 462 *Zus.*)

Language is thus intrinsic to thought. The immanent development of thought is a development in language, or words, and only language, or words, can constitute its “objects.” Thought thinking thought is words articulating words, and can be nothing other than that.

I do not claim that this argument, in and of itself, is convincing; the problem of how such immanent discourse can relate to what is other than

it—how the System can “comprehend” the world—yawns as wide as ever. But it does raise the possibility that language for Hegel not only has the status of an important and fascinating phenomenon, but that we cannot understand the nature of his philosophy without understanding what exactly he took language to be. Hegel *should*, then, have given language a central and thorough discussion.

But he does not. His only focal discussion of language (at *Enz.* §§ 459–62) is disappointingly truncated, for it examines language only as a vehicle for expressing representations, not philosophical thought or whatever else we might want to try and express linguistically, such as feelings. Various explanations for this lack of attention can be found in the literature, but they boil down to a consensus that language’s absence from Hegel’s System is its own fault. Either language is merely an “immediate” expression of Spirit, as Theodor Bodammer has maintained,⁹ or it somehow impedes the development of thought, as G. R. G. Mure maintained. Mure has been followed, in very different ways, by such writers as Malcolm Clark, Daniel Cook, Josef Simon, and (in my view) Jere Surber.¹⁰

Some reasons for this lack of attention will come out in the course of this chapter, but my main concern will be different. Having argued for the importance of an adequate discussion of language in Hegel, I will simply assume its lack and to begin to supply it. What, then, is the nature of language for Hegel?

This question can be sharpened.

As early as the Nürnberg “Philosophical Propadeutic” (1810), Hegel claims that language consists “in external signs and tones (*Tönen*) through which one makes known what one thinks, feels, or senses”—that is, in “words.”¹¹ As the *Encyclopedia*’s treatment of language has it, words are “the most appropriate [*würdigste*] way, peculiar to the Intelligence, of expressing its representations” (*Enz.* § 459 *Anm.*). And the *Aesthetics* tells us that “we think in words”; the word is “the most malleable material, which belongs immediately to Spirit and is the most capable of grasping its interests and movements in their inner animation [*Lebendigkeit*].”¹² Where for more recent philosophy of language, especially in the analytic tradition, language consists in propositions or sentences, for Hegel it consists in words. So my sharper question is: What, for Hegel, is the nature of a word?

I. THE DISCUSSION OF LANGUAGE IN THE *ENCYCLOPEDIA*

This topic is missing, crucially, from the truncated discussion of language at *Enz.* §§ 459–62, as well as from the two supplementary discussions to which Hegel refers us there. These are the accounts of the “psycho-physiological material” of language at *Enz.* § 401, which turns out to be devoted

to interjections, cries, laughter, weeping, and so on—to language as a natural expression of emotion—and to grammar, which is identified with the structures of the Understanding (a discussion Hegel never actually gives). The question of what a word is, then, is the crucial question for Hegelian philosophy of language. It is also one which Hegel, for reasons which we will probably never fully understand, does not even begin to treat.

The discussion at *Enz.* §§ 459–62 now appears to be entirely ancillary. In fact it is not, because the project there—to see how language best serves the purpose of expressing representations—is not wholly divorced from how Hegel would view language in general. As he puts it in the introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, “the only thought that philosophy brings with it is however the simple thought of Reason, that Reason rules the world, and that world history is therefore also to be approached as rational” (*Werke* XII 20/12). This passage, with its “therefore also,” makes it clear that it is not only history that is to be approached solely with “the simple thought of Reason,” but everything in the world, including language. Hegel would, if he had treated language as it should have been treated, have examined it from the point of view of its rational capacities—of its capacity to express, not merely representation, but Reason (and thought) itself. In other words, his approach would, from the start and consciously, subordinate language to Reason; it would be teleologically motivated.

Jacques Derrida has traced the way in which Hegel privileges speech over writing, at *Enz.* § 459, to Hegel’s teleologically motivated view of time as the sublation of space. This Derrida takes to be motivated, in turn, by Hegel’s concern, as a metaphysical thinker, for validating and securing the philosophical dream of “full presence.”¹³ This is true, I take it, as far as it goes. That it does not go all that far, however, is perhaps suggested by the openness with which Hegel concedes the point, when he limits his discussion to language as a vehicle for the expression of representations. From that point of view, it makes perfect sense to limit one’s discussion of language to the relative merits of spoken and written utterances, and (within the latter) to a comparison of alphabetic and hieroglyphic writing. Is Derrida mistaking the purpose of a specific discussion for the motivating force of teleology in general?

I think not. Hegel does privilege spoken over written language, I suggest, both at § 459 and elsewhere. The question for a fuller account of the nature of words than Hegel actually gives is not whether that privileging occurs, but whether it is justified by anything other than an unexamined metaphysical preference for “full presence.” To do that, we must see words not in terms of their telos but in terms of their origin as Hegel conceives it, and this permits my question to be sharpened once again: where do words come from?

II. SOUNDS

If words are essentially spoken for Hegel, on their most basic level they are sounds. What is a “sound”?

As the discussion of sound (*Klang*) at *Enz.* § 430 has it, a sound is a noise produced by vibration, that is, by the movement of a body from its specific place and back to it: an oscillation between the negation (of that place) and the negation of that negation.

A body can vibrate only if it is cohesive; the noise (*Schall*) a stone makes, for example, when it is cracked by a hammer, or the rushing of a brook (*Rauschen*) are not “sounds” in Hegel’s sense. A true sound requires—indeed, exemplifies—the identity of the sounder, in the sense of identity-which-embraces-difference developed in Hegel’s *Logic*.¹⁴ There must be a unity to the sounding object that holds it together and returns it to the place it had left—a unity that Hegel, again following the *Logic*, calls “inner.”¹⁵

True to what Hegel in the *Logic* calls the “immediate identity of inner and outer,” the inner movement-and-return of vibration is also a movement outward: sound propagates. A vibration in one body sets off vibrations in the surrounding medium of air, water, or earth. These vibrations are inaudible themselves, presumably because the media in question are not cohesive; but they set off matching vibrations in other bodies, which resonate in return. Hegel does not shrink from calling this process one of “communication” (*Mitteilung*). In propagation, the sound negates the body that it is in without returning back to it: it negates not merely the specific place of that body but the body *in toto*.

Sound thus negates the material reality of the sounding body in two ways, one of which is negated in turn while the other is not. The negating of material reality is, in Hegel’s terminology, the process of “idealization” (cf. *Werke* XIII [*Ästh.*] 162f/120), and so both internal vibration and propagation are “idealizations.” Since the nature of a material thing is to submit to the externality, or *Ausseinandersein*, of space, idealization’s negation of that is itself a push toward internality and unity; as pushing toward these things, it pushes toward “subjectivity” as well, since the subject is the ultimate negation of materiality—one which, as in Kant, negates all the specific qualities of the individual (*Werke* XV, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 156/907).

III. TONES

This push toward internality, unity, and subjectivity entails a push toward animation. Inanimate bodies can transmit sounds (as when I pluck a guitar string), but do not originate them (*Enz.* § 300 *Zus.*). Sounds are thus generated by bodies which, being organic, are relatively complex—they have internal structure.

The push toward interiority that characterizes sound is actually achieved in the “tone,” the inner, self-producing sound. Tone is “a vibration . . . in which the body, without changing its relative position as a whole body, moves its parts only” (*Enz.* § 401 *Zus.*).

This means two things. First, in producing a tone, various internal parts of the originating body vibrate together; the production of a tone, like that of a sound but in more complex ways, sublates the “indifferent externality” (*gleichgültiges Auseinandersein*) that bodily parts, as merely corporeal, have to one another. It too is therefore a process of “idealization.” As such, it is a negation of spatiality altogether, in favor of time: the production of a tone is, like all motion, a *Zeitlichgesetzwerden der Körperlichkeit*, the body coming to be posited as temporal.

Hegel’s privileging of time over space, in the form of the sublation of the former by the latter, is carried out at *Enz.* §§ 254–61. That move is invoked here, not on general grounds, but in the interest of destabilization: it is important for Hegel that the tone be something which, as the *Aesthetics* puts it, “in its coming-to-be is annihilated by its very existence, and vanishes of itself” (*Werke* XV 134/890). For it is only because of its temporal instability that the tone can “mean” something:

The tone is the transient [*flüchtige*] appearance of an interiority, which in this utterance [*Äußerung*] does not remain something external [*ein Äußerliches*] but rather announces itself as subjective and inner, which essentially means something. (*Werke* IV 52/157, where *Erscheinung* is translated as “manipulation”)

Meaning is “essential” to the tone *because* the tone is transient. The meaning of an utterance for Hegel is that to which the mind is directed by that utterance.¹⁶ Meaning itself, in the sense of signification in general, is a process by which the mind moves from one thing to something else, which then (under certain circumstances, such as repetition) counts as its “meaning.”¹⁷

Anything, presumably, can have a meaning: we look on the pyramids and find our thoughts conveyed to death, which counts for us as their “meaning.” But a death rattle accomplishes the same thing more neatly, because it expires as it is uttered. The pyramid does not *require* our mind to move to something else: it simply stands there. But with a tone we have no choice, because it dies away as it is born, and its very determinate being is to do just that (one thinks of the sound “being” at the beginning of the *Logic*, which as the only component of the System at that point directs the mind onward to . . . nothing).

In the first instance, the meaning of a tone is the interiority or subjectivity of whatever produced it:

The expression [*Äußerung*] . . . does not produce an object persisting in space, but shows through its free unstable soaring that it is a communication which, instead of having stability on its own account, is carried only by the inner and subjective, and is to be there only for the sake of the inner and subjective.

Thus the tone is an expression [*Äußerung*] and an externality, but an expression which makes itself disappear again precisely because it is an externality. (*Werke* XV 136/891f.)

The meaning of a tone is thus, in the first instance (or, as we will see, almost the first) subjectivity in general—the entire interiority of the producing body's parts that produced it.

But there are, again essentially, more than one tone; each individual note in the musical scale (*Ton* can and does mean both) stands as part of a system of notes whose relations to one another constitute stable patterns (preeminently, tonic, fourth, and fifth: *Werke* XV [*Ästh.*] pp. 151, 159–62/903f, 910–12). These relations are quantitative (e.g., doubling the length of a string results in a tone an octave lower), and as such are merely “external” to the individual tones themselves, which are never found together that way in nature (*Werke* XV [*Ästh.*] 160/910). Each individual tone, then, can stand on its own, can be animated by subjectivity independently of other tones and be an expression in its own right (160/910).

This gives rise to a complexity of coordination between inner and outer. I have noted that the tone, because of its instability, directs the mind of one who perceives it back to subjectivity itself, the “inner domain of time” (*Werke* XV [*Ästh.*] 151/903) from which and for which it is transiently there. But to that subjectivity—that is, to the whole interiority of the toning body—we can also coordinate not just an individual tone but the whole system of them. Which means that each individual tone can be coordinated to just one ingredient in that subjectivity. Examples are interjections: a snarl directs us to the anger in the snarling being, a laugh to its good humor. But representations, once the mind has formed them, are other examples: “It is particularly important that through the articulation of tones not only images in their determinacy but also abstract representations get designated” (*Werke* IV 52/156).

The individual representation or feeling, to be sure, does not exhaust the meaning of the tone: it still must direct the mind to subjectivity in general, for without that there would be no path from the tone to the individual representation meant by it. (Indeed, several levels could be discriminated here: in order to know that Alice is talking about horses, I must first know that she is talking about something; and in order to know that Alice is talking about something I must first classify her utterances as speech; that is, I must ascertain that someone is talking about something.)

In addition to these two meanings for a tone (the specific feeling or representation to which it directs the mind, and subjectivity in general), there is another. As Hegel tells us in the *Science of Logic*, a tone directs the mind to the other components of its harmonic system:

The individual tone first has a sense [*Sinn*] in the relation and connection to another and to the sequence [*Reihe*] of others; the harmony or disharmony

in which a circle of connections constitutes its qualitative nature, which rests upon quantitative relations. . . . The individual tone is the tonic [*Grundton*] of a system, but equally again a single member in the system of a different tonic. (*Werke* V 421/355)

Without saddling Hegel with any hard and fast version of the storied German distinction between *Bedeutung* and *Sinn*, we can say that the *Bedeutung* of a tone is some component of the interior of the producing body (anything from a feeling to a representation), while its *Sinn* is a specific set of other tones, standing in quantitative relations to each other and to it. The *Sinn* makes possible the *Bedeutung*: it is only because the tone is coordinated to other tones that it can come to stand for merely a part of subjectivity, not the whole.

It is this *Sinn*, in the first instance, that a tone loses when it becomes a mere verbal sign—a *Zeichen*, or as Hegel tends to put it, a “sign meaningless for itself” (*Werke* XII [*Ästh.*] 122/88); XV [*Ästh.*] 144/898).¹⁸ Signs, unlike tones, do not stand in harmonic relations to one another; without the need to conform to those relations, they are free to take on many other, often arbitrary, marks of mutual contrast—as when the human vocal apparatus articulates the sounds “I” and “i” with the same tone. Where a tone stood in harmonic relation to a finite, indeed rather small, system of other tones, a verbal sign is merely one among a vast number of alternatives. It is no longer capable of expressing anything as inwardly “pervasive” as a feeling, and so is no longer the product of the whole subjectivity of the person who utters it: it is “meaningless for itself”: “The Spirit thus withdraws its content from the tone as such, and announces itself through words, which to be sure do not completely leave the element of sound, but sink back to being merely an external sign of communication” (*Werke* XV [*Ästh.*] 227f./963).

IV. WORD

We thus arrive at the “word,” which for Hegel is usually a sound arbitrarily connected to a representation, though sometimes it is the composite thus formed. The word is

the most comprehensible means of communication, the one most adequate to Spirit, which is capable of grasping and announcing everything that passes through the heights and depths of consciousness in any way and comes to be inwardly present. (*Werke* XV [*Ästh.*] 272/997)

Contrary to how it sounds at first, this passage does not render the conceptual reach of the word absolute: there are things within us which cannot be spoken of because they are too indefinite to become “inwardly present.” Such things are also too incoherent to “pass through” any medium; they simply sit there:

Although the common opinion is that it is just the *ineffable* that is the most excellent, yet this opinion, cherished by conceit, is unfounded, since what is ineffable is, in truth, only something obscure, fermenting, something which gains clarity only when it is capable of being put into words. [*zu Worte zu kommen vermag*] (*Enz.* § 462 *Zus.*)

It is here that Hegel finds himself at a point of almost infinite proximity (if I may so put it) to Heidegger, and specifically to the late Heidegger's thinking of Appropriation as the "way to language"—the point of almost infinite distance being that for Heidegger the (temporarily) ineffable is an occasion for piety, rather than conceit.¹⁹ But I will leave this matter aside, because there are three further characteristics of the word, for Hegel, that need to be disengaged.

First, like the tone from which it is derived, the word is "transient, disappearing" (*Enz.* § 444 *Zus.*). It is

this simple allowing-itself-to-be-perceived [*sich Vernehmenlassen*] which makes no fixed distinction and becomes no fixed distinction, but is immediately perceived and which . . . is immediately taken up into interiority and returned to its origin.²⁰

Second, and unlike the tone from which it is derived, the word consists in a sound that is only arbitrarily connected to a representation. It cannot determine, or even codetermine, which representations a given sign expresses. A snarl is connected with the physiology of the snarler—the inner "subjectivity" of what I have called the producing body—in such a way that it cannot stand for happiness. The word "snarl" retains some of this connection—through onomatopoeia, but to a much lesser degree—and it would be possible (though not easy) for "snarl" to have meant "joy." When all onomatopoeia is gone—that is, when we have a true word—any sound can express any representation. Words thus constitute a resistance-free [*Widerstandslose*] element for expression (*Enz.* § 444 *Zus.*), in contrast for example to other expressive media such as stone and paint (*Werke* XV [*Ästh.*] 222–29/959–70). They are, as the *Phenomenology* has it, the "perfect element" for the outer expression of the inner (*Werke* III 528f./439).

Because words are derived from tones and so are actual sounds, they have externality to Spirit; but the externality is merely transient, and because its connection to thought is arbitrary, it is resistance-free. It is this combination of transient externality and lack of resistance, in turn, which constitutes the great virtue of the word for Hegel. For the word alone permits the intelligence (and by extension scientific Spirit itself) to remain fully with itself in its utterance, satisfy itself internally, and, in the form of comprehensive cognition [*des begreifenden Erkennens*], to bring into being the unlimited freedom and reconciliation of mind with itself (*Enz.* § 444 *Zus.*).

Third, to speak is to determine. In an almost untranslatable passage, Hegel writes:

Determining [*Bestimmen*], the activity of determining as such [*die Thätigkeit sich zu bestimmen*] is the general determination [*die allgemeine Bestimmung*] as *logos*, the rationally determining activity [*die vernünftig bestimmende Tätigkeit*]*—precisely [auch] the word. (Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion III 213/288)*

This goes back to the loss of harmony in the move from tone to sign: just as to strike the tonic is not to strike the fourth, to utter a sound—any sound—is not to utter any other sound, and so not only to act but to do something determinate: a word is not just the general activity [*Tätigkeit*] but a specific “deed” [*Tat*] of the Intelligence (*Werke XII 85f./66*).

There is one final aspect of the word as such that needs attention here. Hegel is famous for saying, over and over and in many ways, that what Reason takes a thing to be is what it “is” (“the real is rational” is just one of those ways; for others cf. his discussion of Judgment in the *Logic*, *Werke VI 301–51/622–63*). Since reason, like thought, is intrinsically linguistic for Hegel, the same goes for the word: “Just as the true thought is the very thing itself, so too is the word when it is employed by genuine thinking. Intelligence, therefore, in filling itself with the word, receives into itself the nature of the thing” (*Enz. § 462 Zus.*). Words, when used in “genuine thinking,” do not refer to realities; they are those realities. (The allusion to Aristotle’s doctrine of the passive intellect, which in receiving the forms of things receives their true natures, is patent: cf. Aristotle, *de anima III.4*.)

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing hardly qualifies as the discussion of language that Hegel should have given but never did; it is far too sketchy for that. Nonetheless, some points have been made that can qualify as basic theses for an Hegelian philosophy of language, and they deserve a summing-up. Before doing that, however, I will discuss a number of problems with Hegel scholarship that have already been resolved by the discussion so far.

Trendelenberg’s famous question—How does movement come into Hegel’s *Logic*?—has continued to vex scholars down to the present day. Terry Pinkard, for example, takes a middle position:

Does not Hegel in speaking of the *movement* of concepts commit himself to at least some form of metaphysical hypostatization of concepts? It depends on how literally one takes the idea of movement in the Hegelian system to be and how one understands Hegel’s usage of “*Begriff*.” The movement of concepts in the *Science of Logic* may be taken as a metaphor for their logical relations. What moves in the *Science of Logic* is not the concepts themselves but thought itself. Each category is a *position* to which thought moves.²¹

One may wonder how a static category would be less of an “hypostatization” than a moving one; but in any case, the problem is easily solved. Movement does not “come into” the *Logic*, but is in it from the start. Its different stages—which Hegel, importantly, calls not “categories” but “moments”—are not substrates which undergo change, but are intrinsically evanescent, for they have determinate existence merely as words, as shaped vocalizations that disappear as they are uttered.

The second problem whose resolution becomes clearer is that of how determinacy comes into the *Logic*. Robert Pippin, taking Hegel’s project to originate from the wholly abstract Kantian unity of apperception, is at a loss to understand how the System can progressively enrich itself. Hegel’s own accounts of the matter are, Pippin says, “idealized” (p. 235),²² “tremendously abstract” (pp. 246, 254), and give a “high aerial view of matters” (p. 249). He concludes that no such account is possible: “The meaning of otherness and negation and the criteria of success vary so much in all such accounts that it does not seem to me fruitful to try to make any general assessment of Hegel’s dialectical method” (p. 255). Determinacy for Pippin generally comes into Hegel’s system by being taken over from reality, in violation of the immanency requirement with which this chapter began and to which Pippin himself devotes enormous scrutiny:

So many concepts [of Hegel’s logic] are clearly as they are because the world is as it is, and cannot possibly be considered categorial results of thought’s pure self-determination, that Hegel’s project cries out for a more explicit, clear-cut account of when and why we should regard our fundamental ways of taking things to be “due” wholly to us, in the relevant Hegelian sense. (p. 258)

If we take the basic and most general level of Hegel’s System to be not the high modern abstraction of the unity of apperception but the humble act of saying something, then at least some of the problems Pippin is wrestling with can begin to be solved. For to speak is to determine; “Being” at the beginning of the *Logic* is not in fact said to be without determinacy, but to be without *further* determinacy—determinacy beyond, I suggest, its mere sound (*Werke* V 82/82). Being, as the *Encyclopedia* has it, is the “general space of names as such, i.e., of senseless words” (*Enz.* § 463). Determinacy is present in Being, not in thought but in sound, as “empty words”:

Whatever is supposed to be asserted of or contained in Being in the richer forms of the representation of the absolute or God, this is in the beginning merely an empty word and merely being; this simplicity, which otherwise has no further meaning, this emptiness, is therefore completely the beginning of philosophy. (*Werke* V 79/78)

Answering Pippin’s problems in full would require a much more complete account of Hegel’s System than can be given here; but the path to a possible answer is at least open.

Third, we can see that Hegel's teleological privileging of speech over writing is not, *pace* Derrida, the full story. Speech is privileged, not only through what it serves, but because of where it comes from. Spoken language, produced from the interior cooperation of various organs of the human body, is rooted in our embodiment and its "ideal" subjectivity in ways that written language can never be. This would be true even if language could not serve thought as Hegel thinks it can, for it is true in cases where language dissimulates thought, such as "Culture and its Realm of Actuality" (*Werke* III 376/308f.). Rootedness in embodiment, as my discussion here has (I hope) established, is something language *always* has, because it comes from tones which are sounds. The capacity to serve thought as a medium without resistance is something language fully gains only in philosophy. Derrida's reading of Hegel's "semiotics," if taken alone, thus risks occluding the embodiment essential to language and, indeed, occluding the body itself. It is thus, paradoxically, in danger of rendering itself complicit with one of the main aims of the "metaphysical" tradition as Derrida understands it.

Fourth and finally, we can now see at least one of the ways in which Hegel's philosophy is a philosophy of language without seeming to be so. For words do not, philosophically considered, "refer" to realities. Rather, as I noted above, they *are* those realities in a higher, more conceptualized form. Hence if we want, as philosophers, to examine the nature of causality, we do not look to experiences of cause and effect, because experience is a confused and ignorant teacher (as the *Phenomenology's* opening section on sense certainty seeks to establish). Instead, we look to what genuine thinkers *say* about causality: the word *Ursache* itself, when the various senses in which philosophers have discussed it have been fully defined, tells us what we want to know. In so doing, we *could* say that we are analyzing the word *Ursache*, or the concept of causality. But for Hegel, the right way to put it is that we are analyzing causality itself.

These four considerations suggest ways in which it is fruitful to view Hegel's philosophy as philosophy of language. But what sort of philosophy of language would it be, and would it be worth pursuing? I will suggest some ways in which it is very much worth pursuing by summing up some of its basic theses, though crudely:

1. Language is an expression of subjective contents, especially (but not only) of representations.
2. Subjective contents are fleeting. Language conforms to their nature by being itself unstable. Linguistic expressions in the proper sense are merely words, formed breaths that have no being other than to express interiority.
3. On the philosophically interesting level, words do not refer. Rather, the fundamental activity of the verbal sign is to direct the mind of a hearer toward its meaning, which is always both general (subjectivity as such) and specific (what is actually "in" the speaking subject at a given time).

4. When used by “genuine thinking,” the word gives the true nature of what is being talked of: it does not “refer” to reality, but coincides with it.
5. The meaning of a word is not always a mental content such as a feeling or representation, but can in principle be another word.

Even such a crude summary suggests some of the ways in which Hegelian philosophy of language, were it ever to be pursued, would contrast with some of the forms more prevalent today. To put it crudely again, Frege’s attack on “psychologism,” from which much contemporary philosophy of language grows, conceived of psychological processes as unrolling in the individual mind. It also conceived of the “inner world” of the individual mind in Kantian terms: as structured by time. To “lead us out” of the inner world required, then, leading us out of time itself: “the truth which we acknowledge by using the assertoric-sentence form is timeless.”²³ Frege’s antipsychologism was motivated by the desire to preserve communication, and indeed science itself; but as has often been pointed out, it fails to recognize that the “inner world” can be not only individual, but sociocultural. Truncating this dimension has led to widespread “fetishing” of language; that is, to looking at it in abstraction from the interpersonal contexts in which alone it can arise. Hegel’s philosophy thus joins those branches of philosophy of language—Wittgenstein and Grice come to mind—which refuse to do that.

Further, by looking not to sentences but to words, Hegelian philosophy of language joins with some aspects of the British tradition of linguistic analysis. Hegelian philosophy in general, however, has a kind of systematic overview that the classical linguistic analysts, such as J. L. Austin, did not have. This has the effect of guiding Hegelian analysis of language to those aspects of language that are truly basic—such as the many words Hegel examines and clarifies, and often criticizes, in his *System*.

An Hegelian philosophy of language would thus be a systematic clarification and critique of the important words through which we structure our societies and lives. As such, it would be not only a good way to understand Hegel, but a project well worth pursuing. This chapter began by asking “How could language not have been important to Hegel?” So it is perhaps well to end it by asking “How can Hegel’s philosophy of language not be important to us?”

NOTES

1. References to the *Encyclopedia* will be by paragraph number; “*Ann.*” denotes one of Hegel’s own marginal comments; “*Zus.*” denotes material from students notes. References to translations, after the first to each, will be given after slashes.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 20 vols., 1970–1971) (hereinafter: *Werke*), XI 275–354.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1931), p. 183; *Werke* XX 106f.; English translation, Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances M. Simson (New York: Humanities, 3 vols., 1974), III 204. The manuscript for the *Lectures* dates, to be sure, from the Jena period, but Hegel used it to lecture from until the end of his life. See the testimony of Michelet, quoted at *Werke* XX 522.

4. Hegel, *Werke* III 528f.; English translation, Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 439.

5. Hegel, *Werke* XII 85f.; English translation, Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), p. 66.

6. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1074b34; Hegel's actual quote is from 1072b18–30.

7. The most influential contemporary exponent of the view alluded to is Robert Pippin, who takes the System to be about "the categorical structure that makes possible determinate objects of its intentions." Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 200.

8. In my own view, the immanent development of Hegelian thought is expressed in words appropriated from the expert German of Hegel's day, but stripped of their meanings by the activity of "mechanical memory." Each such word thus has *two* meanings: one from the System, and one from expert speech. At first this relation is one of mere homonymy, which preserves the demand for immanence; but the identity of Systematic and expert words is demonstrated as thought progresses, thus allowing the System to "comprehend" not only expert words but, to some degree, the external realities those words capture. John McCumber, *The Company of Words* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

9. Theodor Bodammer, *Hegels Deutung der Sprache* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969).

10. G. R. G. Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950); Malcolm Clark, *Logic and System* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971); Daniel Cook, *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); Josef Simon, *Das Problem der Sprache bei Hegel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966); Jère Paul Surber, "Hegel's Speculative Sentence," *Hegel-Studien* 10 (1975): 211–29.

11. Hegel, *Werke* IV 213; English translation, Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 8.

12. Hegel, *Werke* XV 144/239; English translation, Hegel, *Aesthetics*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 2 vols. with consecutive pagination, pp. 972, 989.

13. Jacques Derrida, "Le puits et la pyramide: introduction à la sémiologie de Hegel" in Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), pp. 79–127, 101–11; English translation, Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to the Semiology of Hegel," in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 69–108, esp. pp. 88–95.

14. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, ed. Georg Lasson (Hamburg: Meiner, 2 vols., 1932), II 26–32; English translation, Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities, 1976), pp. 411–16.

15. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* II 150–52/523–26.

16. As Derrida notes: Derrida, "Le puits et la pyramide," p. 82/71.

17. Cf. *Werke* IV 214/8.

18. *Sinn* will be importantly restored to the tone, by the name as mere “sign,” at *Enz.* § 463 (“mechanical memory”); like “the “names” through which such memory runs, such restored *Sinn* will be important to thinking in ways I cannot explore here.

19. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 4th ed., 1971); English translation, Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

20. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* (Walter Jaeschke, Hrsg.) (Frankfurt: Meiner, 3 vols., 1983), III 213; English translation, Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), III 288.

21. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), p. 14; cf. A. Trendelenberg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Berlin, 1840).

22. All quotes from Pippin are from Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

23. Gottlob Frege, “Thoughts,” in Frege, *Logical Investigations*, trans. P. T. Geach and R. H. Stoothoff (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 1–30; the quotes are to be found on pp. 27f.

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CHAPTER 6

Telling the Truth: Systematic Philosophy and the Aufhebung of Poetic and Religious Language

Will Dudley

“I solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

Actually, I do not. I take it back. Because to fulfill that vow, which is casually uttered by every witness who takes the stand in an American courtroom, I would have to accomplish the entire task of philosophy, as Hegel understands it. For the aims of systematic philosophy correspond precisely to those expressed in the tripartite oath: first, philosophy must tell the truth; second, it must tell the whole truth; and third, it must tell nothing but the truth. In Hegel’s view, only philosophy is capable of accomplishing all three of these goals, and any philosophical endeavor that falls short of doing so is a failure.

The injunction to tell the truth means that the truth must be put into words. It is not enough to show the truth or, worse still, simply to feel it in mute isolation. The truth must be expressed in the form of language and, indeed, in language common enough that people can understand when the truth has been told. Moreover, it is not enough to express this or that part of the truth. Philosophy must find the words to express the whole truth, including all of its parts and their interrelations. At the same time, however, care must be taken not to say too much. Embellishment and distortion must be scrupulously avoided, if philosophy is to tell nothing but the truth.

The conjunction of the three requirements that define systematic philosophy thus implies the need to use the resources available in ordinary language to produce an account that articulates the entire truth, and nothing else. This is no mean feat, and so perhaps it is not surprising to find many who claim that if these are the necessary conditions of philosophy, then philosophy is impossible, despite Hegel’s own claim to have made it actual.

The aim of this chapter is to specify more precisely the conditions of the possibility of philosophy, and in particular the conditions of the possibility of philosophically adequate language. I will proceed by means of an examination of Hegel's account of the inability of art and religion to meet the three truth-telling requirements. This will enable us to determine the criteria of successful philosophical language by negation: the actualization of systematic philosophy depends on not employing those features of poetic and religious language that preclude the telling of the whole truth and nothing but the truth.¹

TELLING THE TRUTH

For Hegel, telling the truth is not, as it is for Kant, primarily a moral imperative. But it does have ethical significance. Knowledge of the truth includes, most importantly, the knowledge that we are free. And such knowledge empowers us, Hegel thinks, to reject any authority, either doctrinal or political, that fails to respect our freedom. Because he considers living freely to be our ultimate end, and considers knowledge of our freedom to be the *sine qua non* of a free life, Hegel concludes that knowledge or possession of the truth is of supreme practical as well as theoretical importance.

It is not immediately obvious, however, that the truth must be possessed in linguistic form. It is not clear, in other words, that the truth must be told. Indeed, in Hegel's own view, art and religion, no less than philosophy, aim at giving us possession of the truth, and they do so in part by nonlinguistic means. Art, as Hegel understands it, is the creation of objects that present the truth to our senses. Religion is a set of practices that enable us to feel the truth. Most of the objects that artists create, and many of the practices in which religious people engage, are not primarily linguistic. If such objects and practices were able to give us an adequate grasp of the truth, then the possession of the truth in linguistic form might be desirable, but would fail to be strictly necessary.

That nonlinguistic possession of the truth is not adequate, however, is shown by the fact that both art and religion ultimately have to try to put the truth into words. Poetry and religious doctrine, in Hegel's view, amount to two distinctly nonphilosophical attempts to tell the truth.

Poetry is necessary, according to Hegel, because the truth can be embodied in a physical object only to a limited extent. Sculpture is, for Hegel, the pinnacle of artistic creation, the art in which the marriage of physical form to the content of spiritual freedom is most perfectly realized. In the best Greek sculpture we can actually see human freedom: the harmony of mind and body, the satisfied repose in the present, and the potential for purposive action are all immediately apparent in the stone figures. But even a perfect marriage has its limitations, and in this case it is the inability of static, physical objects to

tell a temporal story, or to present our inner lives, our thoughts and feelings, in sufficient detail. Consequently, there is an irresolvable conflict between beauty and truth. Beauty is the physical embodiment of the truth, but the truth is only partially amenable to physical embodiment. If art is to present us with the truth, then, it must sacrifice beauty; physicality must be renounced to whatever extent the truth requires.

The artistic sacrifice of beauty for truth amounts, in Hegel's terms, to the transition from classical to romantic art, and the transitions within romantic art (from painting to music to poetry) amount to the increasing renunciation of physicality for the sake of an increasingly adequate presentation of the truth. The content of poetry is embodied only in language, and so is limited only by the imagination of the poet, rather than by the constraints of a recalcitrant physical medium. Thus although poetry is not the most beautiful art, it affords the best artistic presentation of the truth, and in so doing it demonstrates that the truth must be not only embodied but also told.

Religion presents the truth not to the senses, but to the heart. Whereas art allows us to see or hear the truth, religion enables us to feel it. Feeling, as Hegel defines it, is the subjective connection to a content, and it is this subjective connection to the truth that religion seeks to establish.

Religion does not suffer from the fundamental contradiction between medium and message that is endemic to art. Art, we have just noted, is plagued by the fact that the temporal and subjective aspects of the truth cannot be adequately embodied for sensory apprehension. Religion has no such flaw because there is no barrier in principle to establishing a subjective connection to any content whatsoever. This flexibility is a double-edged sword, however, because it also means that the mere presence of feeling cannot serve as an indication that the object of that feeling is in fact the truth. One can feel strongly about all kinds of things. If religion is to give us a felt connection to the truth, then, rather than to something else, it must present the truth in a way that is not only emotionally powerful but also determinate. It does so by developing mythological stories that attempt to represent the truth in images capable of evoking a felt response. The collection of such myths in a given religion constitute its doctrine or representation of the truth.

Hegel judges each religion according to the ability of its doctrine to arouse feeling for the truth. Because all religious doctrines are capable of arousing powerful feelings, the sole criterion for such judgment is the extent to which the truth is in fact adequately represented by the stories that comprise each doctrine. The ultimate aim of religion, like that of art and philosophy, thus proves to be telling the truth. Art, religion, and philosophy attempt to put the truth into words in different ways, however, and the important question now becomes how well the specific sorts of language usage peculiar to poetry, religious mythology, and philosophical prose can tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.²

THREE TYPES OF TRUTH-TELLING

In order to understand the differences between the modes of truth-telling characteristic of art, religion, and philosophy, we first need to understand their fundamental similarity. In their attempts to grasp and tell the truth, art, religion, and philosophy all surpass the limited achievements of what Hegel refers to as ordinary consciousness. Such consciousness approaches phenomena in two ways, according to Hegel:

Either it brings everything to mind in the form of immediate and therefore accidental particulars, without grasping their inner essence and the appearance of that essence, *or else* it differentiates concrete existence and endows the resulting differences with the form of abstract universality and then goes on to relate and synthesize these abstractions by means of the understanding.³

In the first of these two modes, ordinary consciousness abdicates the search for truth altogether. It simply encounters particular things without making any attempt to grasp them as moments of larger universals. The result is "a mere view of a world of successive or juxtaposed accidents which may have a great range of external life but which is totally unable to satisfy the deeper need of reason. For genuine insight and a sound mind find satisfaction only when they glimpse and sense in phenomena the corresponding reality of what is genuinely substantial and true."⁴ In its second mode, ordinary consciousness tries to respond to the deeper need of reason by seeking the truth of the things it encounters. It does so, however, in a way guaranteed to fail, because it attempts to understand phenomena by "separating the particular existent from the universal . . . [and then] merely relating them together."⁵

To take one of Hegel's favorite examples, ordinary consciousness cannot understand the phenomenon of love, which it analyzes as two particular people with independent identities entering into a relationship that establishes a union between them. On such an analysis, the loving behavior of the two partners, whereby each voluntarily serves the interests of the other, must appear to be either a mystery or a sham. It is a mystery how a particular person could sacrifice his or her own interests for those of someone else. And so, ordinary consciousness is tempted to conclude, such apparent self-sacrifice must be a sham, a mere means to satisfying one's own interests after all.

The truth of the matter, Hegel argues, can be grasped only with the help of a more adequate conception of particularity and universality. Two people in love do not have fully formed particular identities outside of their relationship, but rather are the individuals they are only in virtue of their union. Consequently, a new analysis is possible, which demystifies love without making it a sham: the lovers can serve each other's interests without sacrificing their own because their own interests are in fact those of their partner.

The lesson of the lovers can be generalized: to grasp the truth of particular phenomena one must seek out the universals that make those particulars what they are, and one must also conceive of universality and particularity in an adequate way. One must take special care to avoid artificially separating the universal and the particular, such that both become forever impossible to comprehend. Imposing such an artificial separation is the persistent failing of ordinary consciousness, when it bothers to make the attempt to understand things at all.

Art, religion, and philosophy, on the other hand, can grasp and tell the truth precisely because they do not subscribe to the ordinary perspective on universality and particularity. Rather, they all grasp the general truth that individuals are particular universals, which in turn enables them to grasp the truth of the wide variety of phenomena that fall under their consideration. Poetry, religious mythology, and philosophical prose do not, however, tell the truth of universality and particularity in exactly the same way, and their differences on this score, to which I will now turn, prove to be the key to identifying and understanding the linguistic features in virtue of which Hegel believes that systematic philosophy is alone capable of telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

POETRY: THE ART OF SHOW AND TELL

We have already seen that Hegel rejects the Platonic criticism that poetry is the enemy of philosophy and cannot give us knowledge of the truth at all. On the contrary, Hegel understands truth-telling to be the very essence of poetry:

Poetry has been and is still the most universal and widespread teacher of the human race. For to teach and to learn is to know and experience what is. . . . Man exists conformably to the law of his existence only when he knows what he is and what his surroundings are: he must know what the powers are which drive and direct him, and it is such a knowledge that poetry provides in its original and substantive form.⁶

But poetry is not philosophy, and the most important difference between the two is that poetry is “the original presentation of the truth, a knowing which does not yet separate the universal from its living existence in the individual.”⁷ By contrast, the speculative thinking of philosophy

evaporates the form of reality into the form of the pure concept, and even if it grasps and apprehends actual things in their essential particularity and actual existence, it nevertheless lifts even this particular sphere into the element of the universal and ideal wherein alone thinking is at home with itself. Consequently, contrasted with the world of appearance, a new realm arises which is indeed the truth of actuality, but this is a truth which is not made manifest again in the actual world itself as its formative power and as its own

soul. Thinking is only a reconciliation between reality and truth within thinking itself. But poetic creation and formation is a reconciliation in the form of a real appearance itself, even if this form be presented only spiritually.⁸

In other words, "the subject-matter of poetry is not the universal as it is abstracted in philosophy. What [poetry] has to present is reason individualized."⁹ The best poetry, for example, tells us the truth of love, or the truth of wrath, not by means of a general exposition of those concepts, but rather by making manifest, or showing, the particular love of Romeo and Juliet, or the particular wrath of Achilles.

To be successful, poetic showing must avoid two potential pitfalls. First, "the universal, which is to be presented, and the individuals, in whose character, histories, and actions, it appears poetically, [must] not fall apart from one another or be so related that the individuals become servants of purely abstract universals; on the contrary, both must always be vitally interwoven with one another."¹⁰ In other words, poetry must not didactically tell rather than show, which accounts for the fact that "poetry takes pleasure in lingering over what is individual, describes it with love, and treats it as a whole in itself. . . . However great the interest and the subject may be which poetry makes the center of a work of art, poetry nevertheless articulates it in detail."¹¹ Conversely, however, poetry must not simply show a wealth of particulars unless they all contribute to telling a universal truth. The particular parts of the work must

remain connected together, because the one fundamental subject, developed and presented in them, has to be manifested as the unity permeating all the particulars, holding them together as a totality, and drawing them all back into itself. . . . If we ask by what right the particular as such can be introduced into the work of art at all, our reply starts from the fact that a work of art is undertaken in order to present one fundamental idea.¹²

Poetry, that is, must simultaneously show and tell.

The requirement that poetry show us particular realizations of the universal ideas it treats accounts for the fact that poetry cannot tell the whole truth. The requirement means that poetry must avoid "a deliberate exposition [of the universal]: the harmonizing unity must indeed be completely present in every poetical work and be active in every part of it as the animating soul of the whole, but this presence is never expressly emphasized by art; on the contrary it remains something inner and implicit."¹³ Speculative philosophy, in contrast, not only displays "the necessity and reality of the particular" (as does poetry), but then, "by dialectically superceding it, expressly demonstrates in the particular itself that the particular has its truth and stability only in the concrete unity."¹⁴ Philosophical dialectic, that is, articulates universals in a way that makes evident the immanence of certain particulars. Because poetry must simply show us particulars, it necessarily leaves implicit the details of their connection to the universals they realize, and so fails to tell an important part of the truth.¹⁵

At the same time, the requirement that poetry show us particular realizations of universals also partially accounts for the fact that poetry cannot refrain from exceeding the truth. To avoid the didactic mistake of turning individual subjects into mere vehicles for universal concepts, the poet "must be concerned in his imagining to dwell with fondness on widening the real phenomenon that he wishes to portray."¹⁶ This explains why Homer, for example, "gives each hero a descriptive adjective: 'the swift-footed Achilles; the well-greaved Achaeans; Hector of the gleaming helm; Agamemnon King of men,' etc. The name of the hero does indicate an individual, but as a mere name it does not bring anything more concrete before our minds, so that for the specific illustration of this individual some further indication is required."¹⁷ Poetry thus functions by conjoining an image to a content that might otherwise be expressed in unadorned prose: "the same thing is expressed, but the poetic expression gives us more, because it adds to the understanding of the object an intuition of it, or rather it repudiates bare abstract understanding and replaces it with real determinacy."¹⁸ This figurative technique is essential to poetry, but "from a prosaic standpoint [it] may be regarded as circumlocution or a useless superfluity."¹⁹

Poetry also necessarily exceeds the truth because, as art, the material in which it embodies the content it presents remains significant. The material of poetry is nothing more than the sounds of spoken language, which prose also employs, and in both cases the sounds are "purely and simply signs" for the ideas they communicate.²⁰ However, "as communications of poetic conceptions, these signs too must, in distinction from the prosaic mode of expression [where they are mere means], be made an end for contemplation and appear shaped accordingly."²¹ This, in Hegel's view, explains the need for poets to make use of distinctive word choices and turns of phrase, as well as devices such as tempo, rhythm, and rhyme.²² Again, these techniques are essential to poetry, but from the prosaic standpoint, which demands "accuracy, precise determinacy, and clear intelligibility," they clothe the universal truth in excessive particular garb.²³

Poetry is thus fundamentally incapable of telling the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The poetic mode of telling is showing, but showing the truth always tells both too little and too much. When the universal truth is shown in individual form, the immanent connection between the universal and its necessary particulars remains unknown, and at the same time we learn more than we need to know about the contingent particulars of the individual in question. If the whole truth and nothing but the truth is to be told, then, it will have to be accomplished in a different manner.

RELIGION: SYMBOLIC TELLING

Since the limitations of poetic truth-telling are due to the fact that poetry does not explicitly distinguish universals from the individuals in which they are

realized, religion attempts to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth by making this distinction. That is, instead of trying to present us with the universal directly, through the intuition of an individual object, as poetry does, religious doctrine attempts to represent the universal indirectly, through stories in which individual characters and actions stand for or symbolize aspects of the truth. Using individuals to represent universals distinguishes religious doctrine not only from poetry, but also from philosophy, which “does nothing but transform our representation into concepts,” according to Hegel.²⁴ Religious doctrine, for example, tells us the truth of love neither through a philosophical exposition of the concept, nor through a poetic presentation of the love of Romeo and Juliet, but rather through a symbolic representation of the dynamic of finding oneself in a union with another by means of renouncing one’s own abstract particularity. In the Christian religion, Hegel claims, love is symbolized by the Holy Spirit.²⁵

In the representational language of religious mythology, therefore, nothing is what it immediately seems to be. Each element that appears in the story has “a significance distinct from that which the image as such primitively expresses. . . . The image is something symbolic or allegorical and . . . we have before us something twofold, first the immediate and then what is meant by it, its inner meaning. The latter is to be distinguished from the former, which is the external aspect.”²⁶ Hegel distinguishes between several different types of symbolic elements used in religious mythology: some are familiar to us through sensation, such as the “son” of God; others are familiar to us through inner intuition, such as the “wrath” of God; and some, like “God” himself are not familiar at all.²⁷ These differences are less important, however, than the fact that all of the elements are symbolic. The success or failure of religion as a truth-telling enterprise thus depends on the ability of symbols to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Symbols are, according to Hegel, nonarbitrary signs.²⁸ Signs are arbitrary when there is no intrinsic connection between the sign itself and the meaning it signifies. For example, the shape and color of stop signs are arbitrary, because there is no intrinsic connection between red hexagons and the act of coming to a halt. Signs become symbols when there is an intrinsic connection between the sign and its meaning. For example, Hegel points out, the fox is a symbol of cunning because it actually possesses the quality for which it stands.²⁹

Because symbols are nonarbitrary, they are also, Hegel argues, essentially ambiguous.³⁰ An arbitrary sign can avoid ambiguity because its meaning is assigned to it. Red hexagons along roadsides mean “stop,” and nothing else, because that is the designation they have been given. Symbols, however, are symbols precisely because they have qualities that point to meanings nonarbitrarily. The problem is the plurality of such qualities possessed by any symbolic object. The fox, for example, is not only cunning, but also quick, red, and small, and there is nothing about the fox itself that can tell us which of its

qualities is the intended symbolic meaning. Conversely, given any content in need of symbolic representation, there will be more than one thing that has the requisite quality. For example, to symbolize cunning one might use a fox, but one might also use a bear or a politician.

The ambiguity of symbols means that they always say both too little and too much. Symbols try to point to a content, but always fall short of it and point beyond it at the same time. This two-fold problem is especially acute when the content to be represented is not a simple determination, like cunning, but rather a concrete complex of determinations, like, say, those that comprise Hegel's *Logic*. No object has all of the qualities needed to symbolize such a content, and any object chosen to serve as such a symbol would have qualities exceeding the logical determinations.

Religion must solve this problem if it is to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and it responds with the invention of "God," which Hegel calls "a representation of the philosophical idea that we make for ourselves."³¹ Because God is an invention, rather than a familiar object, He is not initially burdened by qualities that exceed the logical determinations in need of symbolization. Unfortunately, because God is an invention, He initially has no qualities whatsoever, and therefore must be given some if He is to symbolize the truth.

Each historical religion has, in Hegel's view, furnished its God with the qualities that best represent its understanding of the truth. It is well known that Hegel thinks that Protestant Christianity represents the truth most successfully. But he also makes it clear that even this most successful religious mythology is fundamentally limited by the fact that it attempts to tell the truth in the form of symbolic representation.

Using God as a representational symbol necessarily tells less than the whole truth, because even if God happens to be given the particular qualities that most effectively symbolize the determinations of the truth, this falls far short of explaining why those qualities and only those qualities are possessed by God. As Hegel puts it, "in saying 'God is all-wise, wholly good, righteous,' we have fixed determinations of content . . . but to the extent that they are not yet analyzed internally and their distinctions are not yet posited in the way in which they relate to one another, they belong to representation . . . [and have] the contingency that gets stripped away from them only in the form of the concept."³² This means that although such a God symbolizes the fact that the universal contains certain particulars, He does not symbolize the fact that those particulars develop with immanent necessity from the universal, because that development is not a quality that the symbol itself displays. Instead, the particular qualities of God are represented as simply being immediately there.³³

By telling less than the truth in this way, religion actually distorts the truth, in Hegel's view, since it falsely represents it as something that we cannot fully know. Religion rebuffs the question, Why does God have those

particular qualities? and chastises the curious for the prideful presumption that they might be able to understand. As Hegel puts it, "the position of religion is this: the truth, which comes to us through it, is externally given. It is asserted that the revelation of the truth must be given to man, that he must humbly assent to it, because human reason cannot attain to it by itself."³⁴ Religion is thus in the contradictory position of trying to tell the truth that humans are free by means of a symbolic mythology that necessarily represents us as being dependent on an external authority.

Christianity does try to remedy the abstract separation of the universal God from his particular qualities by representing God as a self-particularizing universal, which the trinity symbolizes. But doing so fails to solve the problem, because even if the Father (God as universal) gives birth to the Son (God as particular) and the two are reunited in the Holy Spirit, this schema is still too abstract to account for the specific particulars the universal contains.

Moreover, the trinitarian symbolism can actually make things worse because it goes beyond the truth in a way that tends to reinforce the very distortion it aims to overcome. The trinity goes beyond the truth by representing God in the human figures of Father and Son. It then claims that God-the-Father and God-the-Son are one and the same, but this contradicts all our experience with actual fathers and sons. The trinity thus uses as symbols things that do not in fact have the qualities they are supposed to symbolize, which has the consequence of making the truth it claims to present seem impossible to grasp. Hegel writes:

One of the circumstances contributing to the assertion that the divine idea is inconceivable is the fact that, in religion, the content of the idea appears in forms accessible to sense experience or understanding, because religion is the truth for everyone. Hence we have the expressions "Father" and "Son"—designations taken from a sentient aspect of life, from a relationship that has its place in life. In religion the truth has been revealed as far as its content is concerned; but it is another matter for this content to be present in the form of the concept, of thinking, of the concept in speculative form.³⁵

Hegel's conclusion is that religion is no more able than poetry to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, because there is a fundamental contradiction between the content of religion and the form in which that content is presented: "the symbol is undoubtedly insufficient for the expression [of thought]; thought concealed in symbols is not yet possessed. Thought is self-revealing, and hence the mythical is not an adequate medium for it."³⁶ The religious mode of telling is symbolizing, but symbolic representation always tells both too little and too much. When the universal truth is symbolized by a variety of particulars, the immanent connection between the universal and those particulars remains unknown and, worse still, the implication is that the connection is actually unknowable. If the whole truth and nothing but the truth is to be told, then, it will have to be accomplished in a different manner.

PHILOSOPHY: TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

To overcome the truth-telling limitations of both poetry and religion, philosophy must adopt yet a third mode of presenting universality and particularity. It cannot, like poetic showing, present the universal and particular as immediately identical, nor can it, like religious symbolism, present their difference as sublime and irreconcilable. In contrast to both of these approaches, philosophy must present the differentiation that is immanent to the universal itself, and in so doing present the particulars that prove to be identical with the universal at the same time that they are distinct from it.

If philosophy is to present all and only the particulars that are immanent to the self-differentiating universal, then its thinking cannot proceed from any particular determination. The arbitrariness of such a starting point would immediately compromise philosophy's attempt to overcome the contingency characteristic of both art and religion. Philosophical thinking can only demonstrate the necessity of the particulars it presents, and thereby justify their presentation, by presupposing neither a given content nor a given form. Philosophy cannot assume, that is, either a subject matter or a method. Instead, it must begin with the only thought lacking all compromising particularity, the thought of sheer indeterminacy, and then attempt to articulate, or put into words, this thought's self-articulation.

The task of philosophy, then, is to bring the determinations of thought to language. It must do so, however, without allowing the language it uses to violate the necessary self-determination of thought.³⁷ Consequently, the language of systematic philosophy must avoid the characteristics of poetry and religious mythology that prevent those enterprises from telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth. A properly philosophical presentation of the truth cannot, that is, make use of either illustrations or symbols. Nor can its language call attention to itself through the use of beautiful poetic devices. Philosophy must "separate out from [its] content what pertains only to representation," which it can do only if it abstains from the use of imagery and literary form.³⁸

Although linguistic abstinence is necessary if philosophy is not to say more than the truth, it is important not to misunderstand this requirement. Hegel's point is certainly not that the truth cannot be put into words, since that is the very position he criticizes religion for espousing and wants philosophy to overcome. Nor is his point that philosophy must strive to develop its own universal language, free from all of the historical contingencies encrusted in particular natural languages. On the contrary, since Hegel wants philosophy to speak to ordinary people, he insists that philosophy must be taught to speak ordinary languages, which is exactly how he characterizes his own efforts in German. Finally, Hegel's point is not that philosophy needs to strip ordinary languages of their contingent particularities, which would be impossible and is fortunately unnecessary. For Hegel is clear that not only is there

no insuperable conflict between rationality and contingency, but in fact because the rational is necessarily determinate, and the determinate necessarily has contingent elements, a certain degree of contingency is necessary to the manifestation of the rational itself.³⁹ The understanding cannot grasp this, and so declares it to be impossible to express pure thought in impure language, but Hegel rejects this view.

Hegel's actual aim is thus not to purge the contingent particularities of ordinary languages, but rather to attend to them as carefully as possible in order to learn to make use of those that happen to express the determinations of thought, and to avoid using those that say either too little or too much. There are no *a priori* criteria available for sorting those contingencies that help tell the truth from those that are a hindrance, and indeed this will vary across languages. The only way to proceed is to attempt to work out the determinations of thought in each natural language, remaining vigilant for the creeping in of noncategorical distinctions and seeking modes of expression that minimize them. Such an approach takes the problem of philosophical language seriously, but without rashly declaring it to be insoluble.⁴⁰

Linguistic abstinence enables philosophy not only to avoid telling more than the truth, but also to tell the whole truth, because it prevents the premature and pernicious focus on arbitrary particulars that limits the truth-telling of both poetry and religious mythology. By not cutting off thinking with representational images that purport to show or point to the universal, philosophy allows thought to develop its particulars out of itself, and can therefore tell the truth of this immanent development, which escapes poetry and religion. Philosophy is thus able to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, because it tells it like it is.

CONCLUSION

Hegel, it turns out, is a remarkably successful philosophical writer. The almost complete lack of examples and artistic style in the body of his systematic works reflects not linguistic deficiency but virtue. Hegel aims to tell the truth, and in order to do so he refrains from attempts to make the truth more accessible that would in fact only foreclose access to it. Philosophy itself demands that he not attempt to appeal to intuition and representation through imagery and symbolism.

It is important to remember, however, that Hegel does not dismiss appeals to intuition and representation altogether, but only as inappropriate for philosophy. Indeed, part of the whole truth that philosophy reveals is that we need to experience the truth not only in the form of thought, but also in the forms of sensory apprehension and feeling. If we have the truth only in those forms, then we do not have the whole truth. But if we have the whole

truth only in the form of a philosophical system, then we do not have it in all the ways our freedom requires. To be free we must not only know the truth but also be moved by it, and the truth is much more moving in the forms of poetry and mythology than it is in the form of dialectical logic. Poetic, mythological, and philosophical truth-telling are thus all necessary to make possible and sustain our freedom by enabling us to sense, feel, and know the truth.

In this chapter I have, necessarily, said too little, and therefore, in my desperation to communicate, I have indulged in the use of a variety of cheap linguistic tactics (and this closing gambit is yet one more) that necessarily say too much. I confess, in other words, that I have perjured myself before the court of science. In my own defense, I can say only that I have committed this infraction in an attempt to contribute to the defense of the possibility of a truly scientific philosophy. Such a philosophy, in stark contrast to this chapter, would be strictly systematic, and in virtue of its systematicity would manage to say neither too little, nor too much, but just enough.

NOTES

1. John McCumber contrasts philosophical truth-telling with artistic and religious truth-telling in *The Company of Words* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 53–58. Our interpretations of the relevant distinctions are largely compatible, and indeed what I have to offer here might in part be construed as an expansion of his relatively brief remarks on the subject. McCumber then goes on to provide an extensive positive account of Hegelian philosophical language, which is beyond the scope of this chapter.

2. Daniel J. Cook points out, in his discussion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that “there is a definite connection between the kind of language used and the nature of the experience or thought which it is reflecting or expressing,” *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 112. My contention is that this also holds true of art, religion, and philosophy, the three different activities Hegel discusses in his treatment of absolute spirit.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III*, volume 15 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 276. Trans. T. M. Knox as *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1001. Hereafter cited as *A III*, with the number before the slash referring to the German pagination, and the number after the slash to the English translation, which I have sometimes modified.

4. *A III*, 243/975.

5. *A III*, 242/975.

6. *A III*, 239–40/972–73.

7. *A III*, 240/973.

8. *A III*, 244/976.

9. *A III*, 245/977.

10. *A III*, 248/979.

11. *A III*, 251/981.
12. *A III*, 252–53/982–83.
13. *A III*, 255/984–85.
14. *A III*, 255/984.

15. Hegel writes that “the universal and the rational are not expressed in poetry in abstract universality and philosophically proved interconnection . . . but instead as animated, manifest, ensouled, determining the whole, and yet at the same time expressed in such a way that the all-comprising unity, the real animating soul, is made to work only in secret from within outwards,” *A III*, 241/973. He goes on to add that poetry “is essentially distinguished from thinking by reason of the fact that, like sense-perception from which it takes its start, it allows particular ideas to subsist alongside one another without being related, whereas thinking demands and produces dependence of things on one another, reciprocal relations, logical judgments, syllogisms, etc.,” *A III*, 319/1035.

16. *A III*, 278/1003.
17. *A III*, 278/1003.
18. *A III*, 277/1002.
19. *A III*, 278/1003.
20. *A III*, 275/1000.
21. *A III*, 275/1000.

22. *A III*, 275/1000–1001. Hegel elaborates on these poetic devices at *A III*, 283–318/1007–34.

23. *A III*, 280/1005.

24. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Part 1, Einleitung, Der Begriff der Religion*, published as volume 3 of *G. W. F. Hegel Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983–1985), 292. Trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, with the assistance of H. S. Harris, as *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume Edition, The Lectures of 1827* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 145. Hereafter cited as *R*, Part 1, with the number before the slash referring to the German pagination, and the number after the slash to the English translation.

25. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Part 3, Die vollendete Religion*, published as volume 5 of *G. W. F. Hegel, Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983–1985), 201. Trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, with the assistance of H. S. Harris, as *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume Edition, The Lectures of 1827* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), 418. Hereafter cited as *R*, Part 3, with the number before the slash referring to the German pagination, and the number after the slash to the English translation.

26. *R*, Part 1, 293/145–46.

27. Hegel discusses the different types of religious symbols at *R*, Part 1, 293–96/145–49.

28. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, volume 13 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 394–95. Translated by T. M. Knox as *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 304–305. Hereafter cited as *AI*, with the number before the slash referring to the German pagination, and the number after the slash to the English translation.

29. *A I*, 395/304.
30. *A I*, 395–7/305–306.
31. *R*, Part 1, 272/122.
32. *R*, Part 1, 296–97/149–50.
33. Hegel claims that “immediacy is the principle category of representation” at *R*, Part 1, 301/154.
34. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*, volume 18 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 92. Trans. E. S. Haldane as *Lectures on the History of Philosophy I: Greek Philosophy to Plato* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 71. Hereafter cited as *P I*, with the number before the slash referring to the German pagination, and the number after the slash to the English translation, which I have often modified.
35. *R*, Part 3, 208–209/425.
36. *P I*, 109/88. Also see *P I*, 107/85, where Hegel writes that “in all religions there is this oscillation between the figurative and thought.”
37. As Richard Dien Winfield puts it: “If philosophy is not a hopeless enterprise and thinking operates through words, then language would have to be a medium that in no way juridically determines what gets expressed by its means,” *Overcoming Foundations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 89.
38. *R*, Part 1, 292/145.
39. See, for example, his discussion of the rationality of positivity in both ethics and religion, at *R*, Part 3, 180/394–95.
40. Daniel J. Cook emphasizes the importance for Hegel of doing philosophy in ordinary languages, and the possibility of finding resources in those languages that express the truth of speculative thinking, in *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel*, 161–62.

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SECTION 3

Hegel and Contemporary Philosophy of Language and Linguistics

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CHAPTER 7

Language, Objects, and the Missing Link: Toward a Hegelean Theory of Reference

Katharina Dulckeit

I. THE ISSUE

The debate between skeptics who deny the possibility of knowledge and the philosophers who seek to affirm it is a long and spirited one, going back at least to Plato. Recent work by Michael Forster, Terry Pinkard, and others has gone a long way toward rehabilitating Hegel as an epistemologist. Different kinds of knowledge require different kinds of justification, but clearly knowledge of objects in experience ultimately presupposes the possibility of a secure link between words and objects, no matter what the ontological status of the object may be.¹ This crucial link between words and things is what theories of reference seek to establish. Because reference has such far-reaching implications for knowledge, it is vital to examine whether, and under what conditions, it is possible. Unless the possibility of reference is demonstrated, we remain vulnerable to skepticism.

II. THE PROBLEM

Unfortunately the leading theories—the traditional Description Theory of Reference and its rival, the Causal Theory of Reference, and theories of Direct Reference—have such serious problems that they ultimately fail to provide a link secure enough to stave off skepticism. With regard to description theories, perhaps the most serious of these difficulties is the fact that they attempt to explain reference of one part of language by appeal to another; that is, they try to link names to bearers through descriptions, or words to things through more words. Consequently, they cannot explain how language, ultimately, is linked to concrete objects of experience. Thus description theories entail the

view that language is intrinsically self-referential. Since the very purpose of theories of reference is to establish a link to the world, the inability to do so means description theories remain, in Michael Devitt's language "essentially incomplete."²

The consequences of that kind of thinking can be seen in the recent talk about relativism and antirealism. In its most extreme form, such talk entails the view that humans live, quite literally, in different realities. Think of Goodman's "versions" or Kuhn's "paradigms." And think particularly of Derrida's deconstruction and the "discourses" of the poststructuralists that dominate literary theory.³ Their skepticism regarding philosophy—its supposed futility and the self-delusional character of its poor, clueless practitioners, ultimately depends on the argument that words and things reside in separate and mutually exclusive universes, that language can't really make it to the other side, and hence that knowledge of the world "out there" is impossible. Indeed, this is precisely the view entailed by the incompleteness of description theories. But now suppose description theories are wrong, suppose genuine reference⁴ is somehow possible. Most of their claims would be disarmed with one fell swoop.

This, precisely, was the promise of the new causal theory. Kripke, Donellan, Putnam, and others claim that reference is determined by some sort of causal chain (hence the "causal theory of reference") which reaches from any speaker who uses the name back to the first user who, in Kripke's words, "baptized" the individual to which the speaker intends to refer and who first fixed the reference. The causal theory thus consists of two components: First, the notion of *reference borrowing* explains how the reference of a name is preserved from speaker to speaker through the causal chain. Second, the theory of *reference fixing* or *reference grounding*⁵ is supposed to explain how the name was first linked to an object. It is the latter that promises to establish precisely what is lacking in description theories: the crucial link to the world that ultimately constitutes reference. Obviously only *successful* groundings can deliver this promise, so it follows that the conditions under which such groundings are said to take place warrant close scrutiny. Oddly enough, classical causal theorists like Kripke have summarily disregarded the need for such an examination. They *announce* but never actually *explain* how reference is supposed to happen, leaving us to imagine that it somehow occurs by magic. They simply assume that, in contrast to the traditional descriptive reference, such groundings go through directly. This omission is astonishing, given the familiar problems of the early Russell in his Logical Atomism period. Many semanticists, like Kripke himself, appeal to the difference between semantic reference and speaker's reference to explain their lack of interest in examining reference fixing.⁶ However, this will not do. Given that names remain empty unless the causal chain ends in a genuine grounding in an object, it is essential that we explain the conditions under which acts of grounding are possible. If we do

not, the entire causal chain of reference borrowing will come loose from its supposed moorings and float free from the world. Or, more accurately, it will turn out it was never tied down in the first place. This would leave the “new” theory no better off than the “old.”

The trouble with the causal theory, then, is that it ultimately runs into a problem with grounding. This problem, which has been dubbed the *qua*-problem⁷ remains unsolved and is fatal to the theory. It seems that the causal theory cannot do what it was designed to do without going back to the description theory to reclaim one of its features: the requirement that we know something, however minimal, about the referent when we use a name or a natural kind term. But the strategy of borrowing from the description theory carries an unacceptable price: to the extent that the causal theory retains a descriptive element it remains incomplete. If this is correct, it would destroy, once again, the rock-bottom guarantee of reference that the causal theory was supposed to deliver in the first place. Thus the causal theory is caught in a bind: it cannot work without help from the description theory, and yet, it cannot work with it. We seem to be stuck in a genuine dilemma.

The upshot is that we need a satisfactory theory of reference fixing. This is a crucial but thorny issue. Much depends on how we define “semantics”—whether we take it to include or exclude pragmatic and cognitive elements.

I want to suggest an alternative approach: word and object, or speaker and referent, are opposites. Opposites are by definition mutually exclusive for analytic philosophers. Given the analytic assumptions about the nature of opposites in general, and speaker and referent in particular, it is certainly arguable that analytic philosophers ultimately may simply be unable to escape the referential dilemma noted above. Nor should that surprise us very much. The history of philosophy is rife with examples. Indeed, discussions of the opposition and connection between consciousness and the world appear in some version in the writings of virtually every philosopher: dualists and monists, rationalists and empiricists, realists and idealists, phenomenologists and existentialists. The most notorious of these, metaphysical dualism,⁸ is merely one instance of the general notion of opposition and otherness. So even if we bracket issues of ontology, as I am doing here, language and world, word and object, speaker and referent remain opposed and mutually exclusive in experience. Thus the crucial link between the referring subject and her object simply demands explanation. As things stand, we face a choice between an incomplete theory and one that opts for, well, magic.

But perhaps there is another way. For the philosopher whose name appears in the title of this chapter, all opposition is mediated while, at the same time, mediation is harmless. A theory of reference based on Hegel’s unique analysis of mediation thus neither commits us to the incompleteness of description nor implies the *qua*-problem of the causal theory. From a Hegelian perspective, the universal is never cut loose from the particular, the

internal from the external, the referring subject from the object referred to, and so forth. Indeed, as things remain “identical” in their difference, in Hegel’s terminology, semantics are not radically divorced from pragmatics and epistemology. As those familiar with Hegel’s work know, these connections are not trivial; they do not result from simple definition and they are not presupposed. Rather, they are discovered during the course of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, where Hegel examines the conditions under which consciousness has knowledge of the things in its experience.⁹ Hegel is the only philosopher I know who can actually *explain*—as opposed to merely announce—the possibility of reference to objects in experience. If we appropriate his notion of mediation, therefore, so can we.¹⁰ Here I can only sketch this framework, a sketch that plainly requires filling out. In particular, it calls for supplementary analyses of certain concepts from the *Logic*.¹¹ Thus one would want to examine Hegel’s critique of the law of the excluded middle, defend him against charges that he violates the law of contradiction, analyze his idea of determinate negation and, most importantly, elucidate his notion of identity-in-difference.¹²

In what follows I shall argue that both analytic theories fail in their most essential task: they *presuppose* rather than explain the ultimate hook-up to the world we call reference. I will suggest an alternative compromise strategy that meets this problem head-on and that is based on what I will label “dialectical reference.”¹³ This approach is rooted in certain insights in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and *Logic*.

III. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST DESCRIPTION

In Russell’s celebrated theory of descriptions, names not only have descriptive content, but this content serves as a criterion for identification of the referent.¹⁴ Thus the meaning of a term determines its reference such that a change in meaning results in a change in referent.

I am not concerned with an exhaustive analysis of the problems faced by the traditional theory or the failure of the so-called cluster theory to address these problems. Nor shall I be concerned with Kripkean arguments that depend on modal intuitions not shared by everyone. But Kripke also made some powerful arguments against the description theory that are not modal in nature. It is to these I shall now turn.

1. Kripke’s Nonmodal Arguments

According to the description view, a speaker must have *identifying* knowledge about the referent. Kripke, however, shows that such knowledge is neither necessary, nor sufficient.¹⁵

There are two reasons why identifying knowledge is not necessary.¹⁶ First, there is the problem of *ignorance*. We don’t know enough to identify the ref-

erent. We might associate “Gödel” with “the discoverer of the incompleteness of arithmetic,” but few of us could identify the proof independently from the name Gödel. Thus we should be unable, on the old theory, to refer to these individuals, yet it seems we do: Hence, identifying knowledge is not necessary.

This is also exemplified by the second problem, the problem of *error*. If we discovered that nobody satisfied the descriptions associated with “Thales,” or “Moses,” then we are forced to conclude that Thales and Moses are empty names and, consequently, that Thales and Moses did not exist.¹⁷ But now suppose we discover that an assumed fictional character really *did* exist. Kripke makes just this point with his example of the biblical figure of Jonah.¹⁸ While it seems unlikely that any person was ever swallowed by a whale, it is certainly conceivable we might discover that Jonah was in fact a real person to whom the tale was erroneously attributed. However, Kripke argues, the description theory could not accommodate such a discovery because it would have to insist that if the descriptions that the name Jonah abbreviate hold of no one, then Jonah is an empty name and Jonah does not, cannot, exist. Indeed, prior to the discovery, no one even could have *speculated* that perhaps Jonah was just an ordinary man about whom a legend had grown; such speculation could not be *about* Jonah since it denies the descriptions that determine the referent in the first place.¹⁹ Yet such speculation is common. Once again, identifying descriptions do not seem necessary to successfully refer. Of course the discovery of error about the historical facts in *this world* has nothing to do with modal intuitions.

Kripke has argued, moreover, that even when the speaker’s associated description *identifies* an entity, it is not *sufficient* for successful reference. For example, if it turned out that it was really Gödel’s assistant Schmidt who discovered Gödel’s Proof, then Schmidt would *be* Gödel and every time we say Gödel (since we must refer to whoever actually discovered the proof) we are really referring to Schmidt. Thus, in saying “Gödel discovered the Incompleteness Theorem” we would not have a false belief about Gödel but rather a true belief about Schmidt!²⁰ Although identifying knowledge was available, it did not suffice to pick out the correct referent. Thus descriptions are neither necessary nor sufficient to pick out the referent of a name.

Thus we arrive at the fatal flaw of the description theory that I have already mentioned in my introductory remarks: it is simply an *incomplete* theory, resulting in a view of language as essentially self-referential. For all its talk about reference, then, the theory is incapable of explaining *genuine* reference, that is to say reference that provides a link to objects in the external world, not just to *concepts* of objects or other words.²¹

Putnam’s famous science-fiction story of Twin Earth,²² designed to argue against the description theory of natural kind terms, illuminates this incompleteness. He imagines a planet somewhere, Twin Earth that is exactly like Earth. Each Earthling has a *Doppelgänger* on this planet, a sort of clone who

is precisely the same as the Earthling. They speak English on Twin Earth. When the Earthling, Oscar, uses a name, say Mandela, he refers to an object on Earth, Mandela. When Twin Oscar on Twin Earth uses the name Mandela he refers to an object on Twin Earth, Twin Mandela. This shows, among other things, that reference simply cannot be determined by inner states or associated descriptions, because the inner state and associations of Oscar and Twin Oscar are exactly alike. The conditions that determine the different references must therefore be external. As Putnam says: "Meanings just ain't in the head."²³ Only the causal theory can explain in virtue of what Mandela picks out its referent. On Earth the causal chain reaches back to the object in which it is grounded, Mandela. On Twin Earth this causal link ends in another object, Twin Mandela.²⁴

Now, the consequences of the incompleteness of description theories are quite serious for obvious reasons: incompleteness implies skepticism. Since reference is in part determined by external factors, and since description theories explain meaning by appeal to associated descriptions entirely inside the head of the speaker, the explanation of reference in such theories can never be a *complete* explanation.²⁵ Hence the "missing link" in the title of this chapter. This is also why claims by the likes of Kuhn and Feyerabend, the poststructuralists and deconstructionists make the most sense if we presuppose some version of the description theory of reference. If description were true, so would be many of their claims, in my view, precisely because description theories cannot hook up with the world.

Our discussion thus far makes clear, I hope, that the description theory must be rejected. Let us now turn to the causal theory.

2. *The Causal Theory*

Kripke writes:

A rough statement of the theory might be the following: An initial "baptism" takes place. Here the object may be named by ostension, or the reference of the name may be fixed by a description. When the name is "passed from link to link" the receiver of the name must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it. If I hear the name "Napoleon" and decide it would be a nice name for my pet aardvark, I do not satisfy this condition.²⁶

Thus, when a speaker uses a name "N" on a particular occasion it will pick out some object *o* if there is a causal chain that preserves the reference from link to link ultimately reaching *o* itself, which acquired "N" in an initial baptism or dubbing.²⁷

Putnam's science-fiction story also extends the causal theory to natural kind terms, such as "lemon" and "tiger." He shows this by supposing that the chemical structure of water on Twin Earth is not H₂O but XYZ. The conse-

quence is that when the two Oscars use the term “water,” they refer to two different substances, even though the *meaning* of the term “water” is kept constant, thus keeping the inner states of the two Oscars exactly the same. This would go unexplained on the description theory in which meaning determines reference. For Kripke as for Putnam, the importance of the initial naming ceremony lies primarily in it’s being the source of a causal chain, or the paradigm case of reference, which determines all subsequent references.

If this is right and names and natural kind terms are more like indexicals rather than descriptions, not only can we solve the problem of using names across possible worlds, but we can also explain the problems of ignorance and error right here at home. If the adequacy of a theory is based on its explanatory power, then it seems that the causal theory of reference wins out over the traditional theory.

However brilliant, Kripke’s scheme suffers from serious problems. The worst of these is the qua-problem, which is lethal to the causal theory.

IV. THE QUA-PROBLEM

Both reference borrowing and reference fixing (or grounding) are affected by the qua-problem. In *The Path Back to Frege*²⁸ Yourgau persuasively establishes the problem, which he puts in terms of speaker intention. Neo-Fregeans have tried to develop some strategies that avoid the qua-problem by allowing certain cognitive elements to contribute to determining reference while simultaneously attempting to hold those elements harmless. I cannot consider these attempts here, except to say that to the extent these efforts are successful, they arguably are so only with respect to reference *borrowing*. But reference borrowing is ultimately irrelevant, for the whole problem comes down to grounding. If grounding were successful, cognition in subsequent uses would not be fatal to the theory. If grounding fails, not even the total lack of cognitive content in subsequent uses of the name can make a difference because that name would simply be empty. In short, if grounding fails, the theory fails.

1. Devitt’s Qua-Problem for Grounding

A dubbing occurs when a speaker who is in perceptual content with an object names it by ostension. The name is thus grounded in the object.²⁹ For example, I once brought home a kitten,³⁰ pointed to her and, motivated by her madcap behavior, suggested to my delighted children: “Let’s call her Jinx.”³¹ Everyone approved. Jinx became the name of the cat based on the fact that it was grounded in her. All subsequent uses of that name would pick out this cat in virtue of the fact that the causal network ended in the cat herself. Anytime we use a name, then, *successful reference depends ultimately on the fact that someone at the beginning of the causal chain baptized the object and thus grounded the name in it.*

Devitt argues that in order to understand dubbing, we *cannot get around clarifying what it means to have perceptual contact with an object*. However, he warns, to say the grounder “intends” the object is not sufficient because we don’t know in virtue of what the dubbing is a dubbing of the “whole” object rather than a temporal/spatial part of it. This is not a silly question because we often name temporal slices and spatial parts of objects. For example,³² “Kristallnacht” names a part, or time-slice of Hitler’s Third Reich. “Tuscany” names a part of Italy, and so on. Second, they point out the obvious fact that a workable theory must have a mechanism by which possible failures of attempted groundings can be explained. Suppose when I baptized the kitten I mistakenly pointed at my neighbor’s cat as she ran through my yard. Or perhaps I mistook a rabbit, a bush, or a shadow for the animal, or had an outright illusion.³³ In those cases we do not intend dubbings to go through. If the grounder’s error is substantial, then the grounding fails. But how can we explain this on the causal theory? Since grounding is explained in terms of the causal connection between the object perceived and the grounder, and since, in the case of error, there still is *something* that causes my perception, why doesn’t the name become grounded in that cause? Thus Devitt concludes that (1) the grounder’s intention to name the *whole* object simply must do part of the referential work. (2) This is to say, *the grounder must have in mind a certain categorical term under which the cause of the experience falls, like “animal”* explains the possibility of failure in grounding: it fails if the perceptual object does not fit the general categorical term used to conceptualize it. No doubt about it: a descriptive element has entered the bottom of the causal chain, a problem that will permeate all subsequent references.³⁴

So where does this leave us? Fregean sense cannot determine the referent of a name, and the concepts needed to identify referents leave the referential link incomplete. To avoid this problem, the causal theory excludes cognitive elements and promptly fails for the opposite reason: Without at least minimal conceptual content, the referent cannot be identified either. So reference fails both with and without cognitive content and therefore fails for both theories. Ultimately, we cannot embrace the causal theory or answer the skeptic *unless we know that, and in virtue of what*, names can be successfully grounded in objects with which the dubber is in perceptual contact.

As philosophers from both camps have noted, the reason for this dilemma goes all the way back to Bertrand Russell’s suspect semantic assumption that the meaning of a name must be *either* like a description (inside the head) *or* its intended referent (outside the head).

2. The Qua-Problem for Demonstratives

If cognitive content at the bottom of the causal chain results in incompleteness, might we look for some basic terms that do not give rise to the qua-problem and

that may then be used to explain nonbasic terms by the description theory? If so, language would remain securely tied to the world. Simple demonstratives such as “this” and “that,” have virtually no descriptive content and, in their deictic use, seem to some the best candidates for a pure causal theory of grounding. This is the move made by direct reference philosophers, the likes of David Kaplan, Joseph Almog, Scott Soames, Nathan Salmon, and Howard Wettstein.³⁵ In contrast to causal theorists who still permit minimal sense, direct reference philosophers have returned to a strict Millian view, the view that names simply tag the items called by them, without carrying any connotation or meaning. Thus demonstratives, relative to their context, are said to be directly referential.

Earlier, we eliminated the description theory because clearly nothing *exclusively* inside the head could determine its relation to something outside the head. But it seems to me that direct reference theorists are now making the opposite mistake. If the qua-problem holds, then terms such as “this,” “that,” and “it” (in their deictic use) cannot accomplish the fundamental hookup with the world. Merely to claim reference goes through does not make it so. We need to explain the role of perception on the one hand, and ostension on the other. So the same questions apply again: Exactly what sort of perceptual link is required for reference by ostension to go through? What exactly constitutes the ability to designate? Ought we not ask *in virtue of what* my pointing succeeds in picking out the right thing? For example, in virtue of what am I not picking out the door, window, or roof when I point at the house uttering “this”? Or in virtue of what am I not picking out the squirrel, the apple, the bird, or the branch when I point at the tree and say “that”? Moreover, in virtue of what am I picking out the referent qua “cat,” instead of, say, qua “mammal,” “animal,” or “pet”? Nothing in the theory explains that, nothing! We cannot ignore all these questions simply because ostension falls outside of a narrowly construed semantic category, as Kripke will have it, particularly since the semantic theory is *anchored in* ostension! Nor can we, on pain of triviality, simply define ostension as that which produces contact with objects. And we cannot naively assume that ostension must be possible simply because we seem to do it successfully most of the time. Having hold of an undeniable fact of experience is clearly not the same as understanding, or at least attempting to understand, the conditions of its possibility.

Bertrand Russell was actually trying to answer just that question with his failed Theory of Acquaintance. Russell may have been wrong about his particular theory³⁶ but he certainly understood the need for *some* theory. What, indeed, has replaced his attempt to show in virtue of what reference goes through? Magic? To say that “this” refers to the house and “that” to the tree because the semantic rules are such that “this” and “that” will pick out whatever I point at is blatantly to beg the question.

If it is correct that perception and cognition play a role in grounding then, by parity of reason, they must also play a role in the (deictic) use of

demonstratives. After all, names are introduced, or grounded, with the help of demonstratives. “This is Jinx,” I said, pointing at the cat. If I have successfully dubbed the beast, the referential work in the act of naming is accomplished by my pointing out the referent while uttering the demonstrative. No matter the name I choose, if “this” has not picked out its object already, the dubbing won’t go through. Demonstrative reference, far from avoiding the qua-problem, is the very birthplace of it. “This” is the first cognitive hurdle to get over. In uttering “I mean *that* one!” while pointing at one’s pet, one could not begin to understand the entity qua individual cat unless one had already grasped it qua individual thing of some *kind* or other. For the speaker must after all still know enough to determine it as the thing at which she wants to point. She must individuate it, but individuals in experience are concrete individuals, that is, individuals of a certain kind. Individuation is only possible in terms of a kind, even the kind “mystery item.” If some sort of cognition is required merely to point out something, even *prior* to the use of language, then, clearly, we must venture outside of semantics to epistemology in order to explain this phenomenon. “This” simply cannot be *directly* referential; it cannot refer by magic. On the direct reference view, “this,” the locus of the referential property, turns out to be the locus of the qua-problem all over again. The magic theory fails.

So where does this leave us? All attempts to fix description theories cannot escape incompleteness, and there seems no way to fix the qua-problem haunting causal and direct reference theories without collapsing back into the very arms of some version of description.

Devitt himself proposes a “teleological” theory of reference.³⁷ This theory proceeds from his staunch commitment to naturalism and realism,³⁸ a commitment not shared by everyone. Clearly it is preferable not to mix one’s theory of reference with one’s ontology and to settle the issue without such a commitment. Hegel does just that. The answer to the puzzle is found within experience.

V. APPROPRIATING HEGEL: A THIRD ALTERNATIVE

Whatever the specific reasons for failure in various analytic attempts to connect words to the world, from a Hegelian perspective failure is implied by *the basic assumptions* made by any analytic philosophy. On that view, the puzzle of missing referential link not only remains unsolved in *fact* but in *principle*. The assumptions I am referring to have had a distinguished carrier in philosophy, and are expressed in a dualistic worldview regarding opposites such as mind and world, conceiver and “the given,” perceiver and perceived, and speaker and referent. According to Hegel, this dichotomy between inner and outer—both ontologically and *phenomenologically*—is a deeply misleading and profoundly

incoherent idea. Nevertheless it has held captive much of philosophy in one way or another. But once a logical distinction is made, the parties to the distinction become *mutually exclusive* and, according to the rules of formal logic, there simply *is no way* to reconnect them. We try to construct theories of reference in a way that will provide a bridge between the two realms. But whatever tricks we try, ultimately we cannot make it to the other side—as the problems discussed above make evident.

John McDowell recognized this dilemma.³⁹ I do not think the alternative view I shall suggest is inconsistent with McDowell's outlook. My suggestion will permit the conceptual content needed for genuine reference, *without* opening the door to incompleteness. The view on reference I shall urge is inspired by certain insights about the necessary conditions of experience contained in Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Logic*.⁴⁰ Appropriating Hegel's insights yields an alternative view of reference grounding not subject to any of the pitfalls implied by description and causal theories. Note that my analysis is not only consistent with Hegel's project but vindicates his most basic conceptions regarding the relationship between opposites.

My strategy may raise some eyebrows in Hegelian and analytic circles alike. First, most analytic philosophers have never taken Hegel seriously except to hold him up as an object for ridicule. Undaunted by their lack of personal acquaintance with his work, they nevertheless see Hegel as paradigmatic of the very worst in philosophy, just the sort of thinking that analytic philosophy has tirelessly toiled to oppose. Thus, dragging the old German from his place in history to settle an analytic problem is greeted with suspicion. It may seem like an illegitimate attempt by Hegelians to "prove" to the misguided (and, we might safely assume, overwhelmingly uninterested) fans of "mere" understanding, not only Hegel's relevance to contemporary issues but also the superiority of dialectic thinking in general.⁴¹ (Something roughly analogous to informing an atheist that she can solve the problem of death by acquiring a belief in an afterlife). Even analytic philosophers sympathetic to Hegel might argue that it seems disingenuous and uninteresting simply to superimpose Hegel's notion of mediated opposition on such contradictions or dilemmas as one may encounter in contemporary analytic philosophy of language in order to "solve" these problems, given that the idea of mediated opposites would seem to solve any contradiction virtually by definition. On the other side of the aisle, Hegelians might see as illegitimate any attempt to appropriate Hegel in this fashion because they take Hegel's project as going beyond the "limited" problem of reference and may disapprove of "cafeteria-style" Hegelianism. Moreover, to appeal to Hegel in order to solve problems in the theory of reference might reek of anachronism because Hegel's remarks about language were never intended as such, but were made in the service of other aims. Fourth, given Hegel's proclivity for mediation, and given that cognitively mediated concepts entail incompleteness, critics unfamiliar with Hegel might

well wonder how he could possibly help us secure the referential link bridging language and objects.

Finally, it may be objected that appropriating Hegel requires commitment to an ontology⁴² so unpalatable, even ignorance about grounding seems preferable.

To the first objection, (proving Hegel's relevance), I shall simply reply that I am interested only in solving genuine philosophical problems. If a Hegelian approach can help unravel a problem plaguing philosophy, that seems clearly advantageous for everyone who is genuinely interested in solving the problem.

My response to the second charge that sees Hegel's interpretation of opposites as a mere trick to avoid uncomfortable contradictions, is to point out that if this were true, then Hegel would scarcely be the only trickster. Analytic philosophers are notorious for availing themselves of such ploys, most notably by using meta-levels, even meta-meta-levels to skirt contradictions they find inconvenient. The difference, arguably, is that Hegel actually attempts to justify the dialectic of mediation, while analysts do not always explain the legitimacy of such maneuvers.

Third, protestations that Hegel did not, strictly speaking, set out to address this particular issue, seem beside the point. Obviously his purposes are irrelevant as long as the results shed light on the problem. (Suppose a contemporary of Hegel had invented a drug to cure disease A, and we just now discovered that the same drug also cures disease B safely and effectively, should we keep it from sufferers of B on the grounds that it's inventor did not intend it for them?)

My response to the fourth complaint is as follows: Despite Hegel's fondness for the mediation of concepts, he is not committed to the description theory and the relativism/skepticism it entails. In fact, the *Phenomenology* shows that for Hegel sense not only *does not*, it *cannot* determine reference. That is not to say that we can dispense with mental content altogether. But I shall show that the mental elements indispensable for reference are not lethal in Hegel's case because he does not share the fatal assumptions noted above.

What can we say, finally, about the unwanted Hegelian ontology? Readers familiar with the *Phenomenology* know the answer: As the title of Hegel's work suggests, the journey is a *phenomenological* one, taking place entirely on the level of experience. In contrast to Devitt, who explicitly commits to realism from the start, nothing in Hegel's account in the *Phenomenology* requires any ontological assumptions.⁴³

The second part of the introduction characterizes this task as a necessary development through a series of forms of consciousness. A form of consciousness is simply the particular description under which consciousness views its object. To see whether a given form is adequate, the concept consciousness has of the object is tested against the way the object actually

appears in experience. The inadequacy of a given form of consciousness is revealed when consciousness finds itself in the dilemma of possessing a kind of knowledge it could only have on the condition that its particular conception of the object as well as its assumed criterion for knowing the object are abandoned. Whenever a proposal of a form of consciousness fails to correspond to the actual experience of consciousness, the conflict is always resolved in favor of experience; the defeated consciousness is superseded (*aufgehoben*),⁴⁴ and a new, more adequate form of consciousness arises with a new set of proposals as to the nature of the object and the relation of it to consciousness.

It is crucial to keep in mind that the forms of consciousness are just that: particular forms, versions, modes. They differ only in what they take their object to be (and in what they take to be the proper criterion for knowledge). They do *not* differ in how they actually experience the object. Only thus is it possible for consciousness to test various criteria of reference and knowledge.

Put into more neutral language we can say that the object or referent remains the same while being viewed under different, even opposing descriptions. This kind of move would be impossible if Hegel thought that sense, in and of itself, *determined* reference.⁴⁵ On the other hand, if there were no sense at all, the discrepancy between how the object is conceived and how it is actually experienced could not arise, much less be understood.⁴⁶

If this is correct it shows that (1) Hegel is not committed to a description theory of names. And (2) the fact that he nevertheless insists on a role for sense or meaning will put him in the position to escape the qua-problem.

1. *The Dialectic of Reference*

The argument I want to consider can be found in the first chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, entitled "Sense Certainty, or the This and Meaning." Hegel's story goes something like this:⁴⁷ A proponent of the "sense certain" attitude sees himself immediately or *directly* related to the object—as passively, directly, and fully receiving whatever lies before consciousness. Because of the passivity of consciousness, the immediacy of the relationship, and the completeness of its reception, sense certainty takes its knowledge to be the *richest* and *truest* kind of knowledge. Note that insisting on the passivity of consciousness is analogous to insisting that meaning is entirely outside of the head. Since nothing comes between consciousness and its object that would distort the truth—no reflection, interpretation, or description—consciousness takes its knowledge to be incorrigible. The certainty of sense certainty is based on the immediacy, which allegedly characterizes its relation to the object. Immediacy *is* sense certainty's criterion for knowledge, the condition that makes knowledge possible and guarantees its certainty. Losing immediacy, sense-certainty thinks, would mean losing its privileged connection to the object. But when sense certainty tests its criterion against its actual experience of the object, it

soon finds out that its *concept* of the object does not correspond to the *object it experiences*. On the condition of immediacy, it turns out, consciousness *could not* experience the object it *in fact* experiences. In order to preserve immediacy consciousness must refrain from reflecting on its object in any way, such as comparing and contrasting it with other objects, because to do so would involve predicates, and predicates, such as “tall,” “green,” and so forth, would also apply to other objects and not exclusively to that of its immediate experience. Such terms are universals. Admitting universals or concepts, however, involves mediation since the object now is no longer given to consciousness directly, but by means of, or through concepts. On the criterion of immediacy consciousness cannot know enough about its object to help distinguish it from other objects. Instead of a particular “this” of which it is so certain, consciousness ends up with a general “this-as-such,” an empty being, devoid of inner distinctions and indistinguishable from any other “this.” Insisting on immediacy, then, would only yield a bare particular. But this is at odds with experience for, as a matter of fact, particulars of experience are concrete. Sense certainty’s claim to knowledge thus contains an inner conflict: It cannot, on its own principles, proclaim as true that which in fact it experiences as true. This is the qua-problem all over again. Sense Certainty fails because neither immediacy nor direct reference can secure a referential link to objects of experience. Insofar as sense-certain consciousness claims *immediate* knowledge of something radically and exclusively *individual*, it lays claim to immediacy and determinacy simultaneously. In order to individuate its object it must determine it. Determination involves negation because to say what something is, is to distinguish it from what it is not. Negation, however, violates its criterion of immediacy while insisting on immediacy, leaving consciousness with an empty this-as-such. Hegel argues that under these conditions consciousness cannot know its object. On my interpretation, knowledge of the object clearly fails because reference fails, and reference is a necessary condition for knowledge of objects of experience. Successful reference presupposes that consciousness can *pick out* the right object, which means that it must individuate it sufficiently to accomplish that. Individuation presupposes a determined and determinable object of a certain kind. As long as consciousness refuses to allow the mediation of concepts, it treats its object as if it were bare. But a bare object cannot be distinguished from other objects—even a mystery object must have been already minimally determined as such. If consciousness cannot distinguish the object from others it cannot pick it out, and if it cannot pick it out it cannot refer to it. Sense-certain consciousness finds itself in the same position as the causal theorist did at the bottom of the causal chain where the causal theory simply could not explain what we accomplish on a daily basis.

And for Hegel, this is true even prior to the use of language. Even pointing fails to pick out its object directly. It cannot consist of a simple and immediate pointing out of atomic instants of time and points in space. What con-

stitutes the This-Here-and-Now-ness of a particular for consciousness is a function of the *context* in which both are situated. Indeed, according to Hegel, if reference is to be possible, neither subject nor object can be bare, nor can the relationship between them be direct. Direct reference is a contradiction in terms. Conflicts resulting from the *conception* consciousness has of its object on the one hand, and its *experience* of it on the other, are always resolved in favor of experience; thus consciousness must abandon immediacy. Under what conditions, then, is demonstrative reference possible?

As I said at the outset, I take it that (a) direct reference (and by that I mean reference devoid of cognitive content) *is not* the only alternative to descriptive reference, and that (b) genuine reference *cannot be* direct in this sense. Not all meaning must be outside of the head in order to avoid the problem of incompleteness. It follows that the fact that demonstrative reference involves some sort of cognition need not be fatal to successful reference, as long as we add a Hegelian amendment.

2. Hegel's Solution

The solution lies in the special Hegelian notion of mediation. On this view, reference becomes a dialectically mediated and mediating link between opposites; in this case, between the speaker and the object of perception she is pointing out.⁴⁸ For analytic philosophy any mediation of concepts will inevitably doom reference to incompleteness. Hegelian mediation of concepts, by contrast, is harmless because the particular is not, as commonly thought, absolutely opposed to the universal, but rather first results from it. And so it goes for all opposites, whether we are talking about the individuality of the object as opposed to its universal properties, or the link between knower and known, word and object, speaker and referent, and so on. Any and all such links are mediated, which means that they can neither be distinguished absolutely nor absolutely identified, and they cannot possibly be linked immediately or directly. In fact, only when individuality and universality exist in a mediated unity can something exist concretely. Whenever we talk about these notions in isolation from the object, we are treating them as *abstract*, or *bare* concepts that do not represent the way things actually are in the world. Abstract entities do not exist. So an abstract, general, or bare "I" can experience nothing, no abstract or "bare" particular can be experienced, and neither exists. By the same token, nonmediated reference is impossible. This is why whatever I come across in experience cannot be bare but already must be determined at least minimally, or it could not appear to me. And whatever is determined sufficiently to *be* something for me is *eo ipso* determined sufficiently to permit reference. So experience of objects and reference to them simultaneously involves three dialectically mediated relationships between the individuality and universality: That of the concrete object of experience, that

of the concrete subject of experience, and last but not least, the link between the referring subject and its referent which first makes reference possible.

Sense certainty fails precisely because it keeps closing its eyes, as it were, to the concreteness of speaker and referent, because to admit concreteness is to admit mediation of universals. And mediation of concepts would spoil the direct connection to the object sense certainty imagines it must have. The very same thing might be said for those who erroneously imagine they have grounded the causal theory in demonstratives. They stubbornly refuse to admit the presence of other factors, both inside and outside the head. A study of the *Phenomenology* clearly demonstrates what I have already indicated: Hegel's mediated connections are not trivial; they do not result from simple definition and they are not presupposed. Rather, they emerge during the course of Hegel's investigation of consciousness and the conditions under which it has knowledge of the things in its experience. If a given proposal of those conditions fails the test of experience, it is ruthlessly thrown over in favor of experience, and a new proposal will be tested. Ultimately, Hegel sees thought and world as isomorphic.⁴⁹ This view is a far cry from the assumptions that deposited us in the referential mess in the first place. Clearly, a Hegelian solution escapes philosophers who are still caught in that profoundly misleading paradigm of "the understanding." From that standpoint, no *direct* route to the referent is available, and if reference is routed through concepts, incompleteness splits word from thing. However, from a Hegelian vantage point, we can recognize the essential identity-in-difference between word and thing. Thus the referential link is assured. So it turns out that we *can* keep our referential cake and eat it, too, as long as the cake is *dialectical*, which is to say, a unity of mediated opposites.

Ultimately, it is clear that abilities to designate cannot possibly be *tested* without venturing outside of semantics. *And without an appropriate test, reference simply cannot be guaranteed.* Hegel's contribution lies in the fact that he attempts such an examination or test and that he offers a unique perspective from which to explore the issues involved here. According to his purview, things inside the head cannot be radically divorced from those outside, which is to say that while the former retain independence from the latter in experience, they do not belong to mutually exclusive ontological realms. This is why semantics cannot be severed from pragmatics and epistemology. Thus Hegel would argue that the notions of grounding and ostension ultimately make no sense without the dialectical notion of mediation.

NOTES

1. Whether things in experience are real or merely representations does not alter the fact that we cannot know them unless we can refer to them.

2. Also see Devitt and Sterelny, *Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, 2d edition (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 60 (hereafter *LR*).

3. See John Searle's debate with Derrida on deconstruction: Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," *Glyph* 1 (1977): 172–97. John Searle, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida," *Glyph* 1 (1977): 198–202. Jacques Derrida, "Limited Inc abc . . ." *Glyph* 2 (1978): 162–254 (Northwestern Press, 1988). John Searle, "The World Turned Upside Down," *New York Review of Books* 30 (1983): 74–79. John Searle, and L. H. Mackey, "An Exchange on Deconstruction," *New York Review of Books* 31 (1984): 47–48. John Ellis *Against Deconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

4. I say "genuine reference" to distinguish it from pseudoreference. The former links language to objects as they appear to us in experience, the latter links it to concepts of those objects, i.e., more language. I take it that only the first version can keep the skeptic at bay. Note that my distinction is independent from questions regarding the ontological status of objects and, hence, from the epistemological distinction between things-in-themselves and their representation in consciousness.

5. "Baptism" and "reference fixing" are Kripke's terms. "Reference grounding" is the synonymous term used by Devitt and others.

6. Saul Kripke, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference," in T. E. Uehling and H. K. Wettstein, eds. *Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 6–27.

7. Michael Devitt, *Designation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), chapter 7, 60–64. The qua-problem puts a name to a worry I have had since I first read *Naming and Necessity* in Graduate School! Unfortunately I never ran across Devitt until some years later. As Devitt points out, the qua-problem was first noted for natural kind terms by Papineau and Dupre. Devitt applied it to proper names. See David Papineau, *Theory and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), chapter 5, section 7. John Dupre, "Natural Kinds and Biological Taxa," *Philosophical Review* 90 (1981): 66–90. Also see Kim Sterelny, "Natural Kind Terms," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1983): 110–25.

8. Starting with Plato, culminating in Descartes, and echoing in Kant, we find sustained and notoriously flawed efforts to cobble mutually exclusive opposites together.

9. Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977).

10. Hegel scholars may not like the idea of appropriating Hegel in this manner, and many analytic philosophers will prefer to keep searching for a working theory within their own paradigm. We shall deal with some possible objections later. But I think it is worth mentioning that rejecting an opponent in philosophy who may throw light on one's puzzles on the grounds that one prefers to remain unfamiliar with his writings can hardly masquerade for cleverness, and certainly not philosophy, even bad philosophy. Given Hegel's penchant for mediation, this should go doubly for Hegel scholars! I am grateful to the slowly growing little band of philosophers who, ignoring past conventions, have been seen playing in both playgrounds. Philosophy can only benefit.

11. Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic* (New York: Humanities, 1969).

12. I have attempted such analysis elsewhere. See "Hegel's Revenge on Russell: The 'Is' of Identity versus the 'Is' of Predication," in *Hegel and His Critics*, State University of New York Press, October 1989.

13. "Dialectical reference" refers to reference that is mediated yet secure. It is based on Hegel's understanding of the nature of opposites. I use the term strictly *phenomenologically*. No commitment to ontology implied.

14. Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

15. Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), (hereafter *NN*).

16. *NN* 83–84.

17. *NN* 33.

18. *NN* 66–67.

19. For an argument against Kripke, see Frederick W. Kroon, “The Problem of ‘Jonah’: How not to Argue for the Causal Theory of Reference,” *Philosophical Studies* 43 (1983): 281–99.

20. *NN* 84.

21. Devitt, a realist and fan of the causal theory sums it up best: “A description theory of names explains the referential properties of one category of term, names, by appeal to those of another, definite descriptions: on the classical theory, ‘a’ designates x in virtue of being associated with ‘the F’ which denotes x; designation is explained in terms of denotation. The referential properties of descriptions are explained, in turn, by appeal to those of general terms: ‘the F’ denotes x in virtue of the fact that ‘F’ applies to x and nothing else; denotation is explained in terms of application. What account of general terms is on offer? In virtue of what does ‘F’ apply to F’s? Perhaps a description theory of some general terms would be satisfactory: words like ‘bachelor,’ ‘judge’ and ‘murderer’ may seem definable. This process cannot, however, go on forever: there must be some terms whose referential properties are not parasitic on others. Otherwise, language as a whole is cut loose from the world. Description theories which explain one part of language in terms of another, can give no clues as to how, ultimately, language is referentially linked to reality. These theories pass the referential buck. But the buck must stop somewhere.” *LR* 51–52.

22. Hilary Putnam, *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 223–27 (hereafter *MLR*).

23. *MLR* 227.

24. Steven Schwartz, ed., *Naming, Necessity and Natural Kinds* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 120–21 (hereafter Schwarz).

25. *LR* 63.

26. *NN* 96.

27. Donellan prefers to call this chain “historical,” rather than causal. See Keith Donellan, “Speaking of Nothing,” *The Philosophical Review* (Jan. 1974): 3–32. Reprinted in Schwarz, 216–44.

28. Palle Yourgrau, “The Path Back to Frege,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1986–1987): 169–210.

29. The critique of grounding that I summarize in this section (4.1) can be found in *LR* 63–65 and 72–75.

30. This is Devitt’s example. I have changed the name of the cat to the name of the kitten I brought home to my own kids when they were small. See *LR* 68.

31. Despite the fact that the noun “Jinx” has a meaning, as a *name* Jinx is on par with, say, “Fred,” it’s a purely referential term. As a name, Jinx has no meaning and serves only to pick out the referent. And it does not matter how many people decide to call their pet Jinx because different causal networks, grounded in different objects, will underlie their use of the name.

32. *LR* 79. Here and in the next note, I changed the example slightly.

33. *LR* 80.

34. This is still different from description. The general term cannot distinguish members within that term and hence cannot serve to identify the object. Yet to the extent that this view is descriptive, it remains incomplete. See *LR* 80.

35. For example, see David Kaplan's "Dthat," in P. Cole, ed., *Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 221–43; Nathan Salmon, *Reference and Essence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); and Frege's Puzzle (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986); Howard Wettstein, "Demonstrative Reference and Definite Descriptions," *Philosophical Studies* 40 (1981): 241–57. For an interesting collection of papers, including some of the above, see Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein, eds., *Themes from Kaplan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

36. For my argument against Russell, see "Atomism, the Theory of Acquaintance and the Hegelian Dialectic," *Perspektiven Der Philosophie, Neues Jahrbuch* 16 (1990): 221–38. Also see Kaplan, who lashes out at Russell for mixing epistemology with semantics, in "Demonstratives: An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Demonstratives and other Indexicals," Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein, eds., *Themes from Kaplan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). It is worth pointing out that Strawson, who wrote on the context-dependability of demonstratives was a descriptivist. See his argument in P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959), 15–30.

37. *LR*, section 5.5, p. 96. "Perceiving a rabbit as a rabbit," we read on page 162 in *LR*, "is a matter of being in a state with the biological function of representing a rabbit . . . the teleological theory of perception becomes an essential part of the theory of groundings."

38. See Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984, 1991).

39. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). McDowell argues (on page ix) that there is a way to rethink the opposition between spontaneity and the "myth of the given" in a way that is not "outside" conception but nevertheless remains truly *independent* of our thinking. He thus argues that we can overcome dualism without reducing either side to the other, by recognizing the "unboundedness of the conceptual." He himself raises the specter of "bad" idealism, only to refute it. His "third way" can be described as unabashedly Hegelian. Indeed, in the preface he writes that he "would like to conceive this work as a prolegomenon to a reading of the *Phenomenology*."

40. *The Science of Logic* (New York: Humanities, 1969).

41. Hegel would think of analytic philosophy as moving on the level of "the Understanding." His own view is that true philosophical wisdom is only possible if one can transcend that level and think on the level of Reason. For him the latter understands that opposites are not mutually exclusive but rather mediated by one another such that one can only be through the other.

42. My thanks to Robert Berman for this criticism.

43. Notice that while the key concepts in the *Logic* help clarify Hegel's take on mediated opposition, we are not obligated to swallow the system hook, line, and sinker. It is perfectly appropriate, in my view, to keep the entire discussion where Hegel himself places it: in experience.

44. This involves the idea of determinate negation, which is a complex notion. Suffice it to say that it is different from the absolute negation of formal logic in that it preserves something of what was negated in the new position. Thus the new form of consciousness preserves the notion that there is a relation between subject and object, but it redescribes what particular form it takes.

45. It has been suggested that Hegel confuses and conflates distinctions made in contemporary semantics and pragmatics, such as, for instance, the distinctions between sense and reference and types and tokens. I have argued that Hegel not only does distinguish these, he actually was first to demonstrate the need for such a distinction. See my "Can Hegel Refer to Particulars?" *The Owl of Minerva* 17, 2 (Spring 1986): 190–93. Reprinted in *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 105–21 (hereafter, *Particulars*).

46. Kenneth Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism, Philosophical Studies Series* 43 (Boston: Kluwer, 1989), 147.

47. For a fuller treatment of the issues involved, see *Particulars*, 181–94.

48. In their dialectical unity each opposite takes on the determination of the other: The universal becomes determined as particular and the particular becomes determined as universal.

49. The Hegelian solution offered in the *Phenomenology* is clarified by several of Hegel's key conceptions elucidated in the *Logic*: the Law of the Excluded Middle, the Law of Contradiction, Determinate Negation, and, most importantly, Identity-in-Difference.

CHAPTER 8

The Realm of Abstraction: The Role of Grammar in Hegel's Linguistic System

Jim Vernon

My goal in this chapter is to articulate and defend a framework for developing a Hegelian theory of language that is a systematic, dialectical totality. Hegel never explicitly offers a philosophy of language, but he is nonetheless far from silent on most linguistic issues. While his most direct work on language concerns the origin and nature of signification and arises in his pre-*Phenomenology* writings and in the last volume of the *Encyclopedia*, virtually all of Hegel's major works introduce elements of language as everything from concrete examples of specific categories to necessary dialectical stages.

Thus, while Hegel never articulates a system of language, the virtual ubiquity of linguistic elements throughout his works may provide ample materials for developing such a system.¹ If the various parts of language enjoy consistent treatments and analyses across the different texts in which they arise, then the system itself may present an implicit theory of language. In other words, by relating the parts of language to each other through the parts of the system in relation to which they arise, systematic linguistic relations can be developed.

In what follows, I will follow one linguistic path laid out by Hegel—that of grammar—and, rather than obeying the borders of any individual text or temporal period, I will follow it where it leads. Thus, I shall be drawing together texts from diverse aspects of Hegel's academic life. This may initially appear to be a serious flaw, in that Hegel's investigative focus is different across his texts and some of his central concepts change significantly over time. However, any investigation of Hegel's philosophy of language will require at least some use of disparate texts, owing both to the diffusion of his many brief comments concerning language and the significant time lapse

between his few explicit analyses. Those who care to investigate Hegel and language must utilize all available resources, lest they forgo valuable tools that more traditional styles of commentary would preclude. Exploiting language's ubiquity, of course, should never mean abusing it. Any connection between texts should be guided by the linguistic concept at issue and therefore requires the demonstration of an immanent conceptual continuity. It is such continuity that I hope has guided my text selection here.

I

In Hegel's works, grammar consistently arises as a tool for explicating the nature of, defending the importance of, and providing ideal instruction in the categories of logic. Thus, we shall begin our investigation of Hegel's account of grammar with a brief look at Hegel's idea of logic, at least insofar as the latter implicates the former.

In introducing his *Science of Logic* Hegel is primarily concerned with differentiating his conception of logic from that held by "ordinary consciousness."² Despite the fact that his *Phenomenology* has already demonstrated the necessity of the pure science of thought as the liberation from the contradictions that determine ordinary thinking, Hegel takes special care "to make the point of view from which [logic] is to be examined understandable to picture thinking" (*Werke* 5:36; Miller, 43). Thus, while the *Logic* in one sense presupposes the *Phenomenology*'s famous conclusion, in another sense it is simply a pedagogical text in logic for those still dominated by ordinary picture thinking.

According to Hegel, ordinary thinking conceives of logic as the "bare form of cognition" abstracted from any particular content or material (*Werke* 5:36; Miller, 43). The rules of logic govern only the subjective act of thinking, while the object or content of thought is presumed to be objectively "existing, in and for itself, as a ready-made world external to thought" (*Werke* 5:36; Miller, 44). Thinking is an intrinsically empty form, irreducibly external to the "real" world and it is only through the aid of this "real" content that abstract thinking is able to become actual knowing by, at best, conforming to its ready-made content or, at worst, to the mere subjective appearance of it. Thus, picture thinking consigns logic to a realm of abstraction that is irreducibly external to the "real" realm of experience. Much to his dismay, Hegel finds that this picture of logic has come to dominate not only ordinary consciousness, but philosophy as well. This conception of logic, however, has overcome philosophy only recently, in the modern era. Ancient philosophers had a "higher concept of thinking" and considered it to be the "essence" of objects (*Werke* 5:38; Miller, 45). They held that thinking and its object were "one and the same content" and that one needed to grasp the forms of thinking in order to arrive at genuine knowledge of the world (*Werke* 5:38; Miller, 45).

Things are quite different, however, under the sway of modern philosophy, which has reduced logic to a “completely analytical method and mechanical (*begriffloses*) calculation” that is external to its content (*Werke* 5:47–48; Miller, 52). Having the appearance of a pure abstraction which lacks the vivacity and utility of the empirical sciences, logic, pedagogically speaking, “may be said to have fallen into contempt. It is still dragged along, [but] more from the feeling that logic cannot be dispensed with altogether, and from the still lingering tradition of its importance, than from the conviction that . . . occupation with its empty forms has value and use” (*Werke* 5:46; Miller, 52). Such are the “prejudices” of reflective understanding that “bar the entrance to philosophy” (*Werke* 5:38; Miller, 45). The business of philosophy, according to Hegel, is the lifting of this bar.

Philosophy, however, cannot conduct its business merely by returning to the philosophy of the ancients. While it is true that, in comparison, the contemporary abstraction “appears as a loss and a retrograde step, [it in fact] has something more profound as its basis, upon which rests the elevation of reason into the higher spirit of modern philosophy” (*Werke* 5:38–39; Miller, 46). Reflective understanding is the separation of the thought of the thing and the thing thought that brings the ancient immediate unity of form and content into necessary contradiction. According to Hegel, this is the great insight achieved by reflection. Thus, philosophy in the modern age must include, within itself, the necessary contradiction realized in modernity.

As the deduction of the *Phenomenology*, however, pure thinking no less presupposes the liberation of consciousness from the oppositions of reflective understanding and the necessary unity of thought and its object. Thus, in an era both dominated by reflective picture thinking and in which the *Phenomenology*’s deduction has already occurred, the scientific and pedagogical value of logic can neither be naturally assumed nor “reflectively” eradicated. One can neither hold logic to be a merely external form of thought (as reflection considers it) nor simply restore thinking to an immediate unity with the world (as the *Phenomenology*’s deduction appears to permit). If the nature and value of pure thinking is to be explicitly determined, then logic must be developed in segregation from its possible extension into, or unity with, the empirical world. Logic must be developed according to its own principle, in itself, for its development to be free and complete. This isolated development is, of course, what the *Logic* is intended to be. Thus, the *Logic* not only serves as an immanent reconstruction of the forms of thinking; it is also a text of formative *Bildung* that teaches the student of logic “to practice abstract thinking” (*Werke* 5:53; Miller, 56). This thinking breaks with the immediacy of the empirical and enables the student to cognize by means of the abstract categories necessary for genuine philosophy.

However, within this account of logical *Bildung*, an obvious problem arises. If contemporary individuals are held fast in the abstractions of reflective

understanding, they will clearly not yet have overcome the contradiction between form and content. For them, logic will necessarily retain the appearance of “an isolated system of abstractions which, confined unto itself, does not encompass (*übergreift*) the other studies and sciences” (*Werke* 5:54; Miller, 57). In other words, the entrance to philosophy would come not as the liberation from reflective prejudice but as the reinforcement of it. How then could the study of logic in isolation actually liberate one from the prejudices that arise from its very abstraction?

Hegel’s curious answer is that the nature and value of logic is understood differently by students at different levels of logical *Bildung*. When one first comes to logic, one will necessarily contrast it with the “wealth of the world of picture thinking (*Weltvorstellung*)” and sense that in logic a certain “scope and depth and wider meaning is lacking” (*Werke* 5:54; Miller, 57–58). The empirical sciences will retain their vividness, and utility and logic will appear as external and empty. However, “it is something else for the one who returns to it from [those sciences]” (*Werke* 5:53; Miller, 57). In the achievement of a “deeper knowledge (*tiefern Kenntnis*)” of the more “concrete” studies, logic “raises itself up (*erhebt sich*)” and reveals itself as the universal content of both the sciences and the world they investigate (*Werke* 5:54; Miller, 58). Logic reveals itself as the essence of things only when one returns to view it from within a deep mastery of the other sciences.

To make this pedagogical relationship between the individual and logical education clearer, Hegel draws a structural analogy between the study of logic and that of grammar. As with the student of logic, whoever begins to get acquainted with grammar “finds in its forms and laws dry abstractions, arbitrary rules, [and] in general an isolated pile of classifications which exhibit only the value and significance of what lies in their immediate meaning; cognition (*Erkennen*), here, recognizes (*erkennt*) nothing in them but themselves” (*Werke* 5:53; Miller, 57). Since the foil for grammar, like that of logic, must appear as ready-made to the individual, to round out the analogy we must assume grammar to be “abstracted” from the student’s natural language as that is the most vivid, immediate, and useful of linguistic contents available to a student. Natural language makes grammar appear as a contrived set of abstract generalities from what is already expressed in a full and meaningful way.

However, claims Hegel,

[o]n the other hand, whoever has mastered a language (*einer Sprache mächtig ist*) and at the same time knows other languages in comparison with it, *he alone* can make himself feel the spirit and culture of a people through the grammar of its language (*kann sich der Geist und die Bildung eines Volks in der Grammatik seiner Sprache zu fühlen geben*); now, the same rules and forms have a substantial, living power. (*Werke* 5:53; Miller, 57)

Thus, like the student of logic, the new grammarian finds herself immersed in something seemingly immediate, vivid, and ready-made in com-

parison to which her study-matter appears as a mere external abstraction. However, after both “mastering” her own tongue and completing some “comparative” study of other languages, she can return to them and find the universal form that essentially structures all natural languages. Grammar is universal across all languages and only a combination of study in languages not our own and some special kind of mastery of our natural tongue can bring this to our consciousness.

Clearly, however, formal grammatical study is not the only way in which individuals come to have knowledge of multiple languages. Many children are raised speaking several languages, thus existing within a “ready-made” world of comparative linguistic knowledge. Moreover, seemingly masterful competence in one’s natural language is a universal trait of humanity, despite the fact that a substantial number of people never encounter anything like formal grammatical training. Many individuals have conversational or reading knowledge of different languages, as well as full speaking/hearing ability within their own without ever confronting the “passive voice” or “subjunctive mood” as categories. Moreover, some grammatical categories and rules (the continuous tense, separable prefixes, etc.) are present in some language families but not others. Thus, Hegel cannot be claiming that any knowledge of one’s own tongue, or even two or more languages, allows us to see the universality of grammar, with or without grammatical study. Furthermore, by “grammar” he must mean something other than the particular surface grammars of individual languages.

In other words, Hegel must have something more in mind by “mastery of a language” than the ideal speaking/comprehension ability that serves as the model for contemporary linguistics, and he must also mean something different by “comparative knowledge” than some version of the aforementioned abilities in a language not one’s own natural tongue.³ Clearly the passage, with its focus on the *Bildung* of individuals, points away from the manner in which we generally speak our own languages and often come to function within others toward more formal, pedagogically based kinds of competence and mastery. It is precisely this kind of language learning that is the focus of Hegel’s 1809 *Rede* on classical instruction in the *Gymnasium*.⁴

II

We should not be surprised that the analogy between logic and grammar has led us back to the classics. While it may seem odd to jump from the mature reflection of a great thinker upon his masterwork to the mere curriculum defense of a *Gymnasium* rector, these disparate texts are united by their common concern for the pedagogy required for true entrance into philosophy in the modern age, as well as with the relation between logical education and the

study of grammar.⁵ Moreover, as a text specifically focused on classical language instruction and its importance for the study of philosophy, the *Rede* develops the relations between logic and grammar to a much greater degree of detail than the briefer, yet strikingly similar, account in the later *Logic*. In fact, the rector's account of the nature of grammar appears to be the assumed background for the logician's brief analogy. If this is the case, the analogy may not be an analogy at all but an expression of the deeper, more systematic relation between grammar and logic in Hegel's theory of language. Before we explore grammar in the *Rede*, however, let us take a brief look at classical instruction at the time of Hegel's rectorship.

The first half of Hegel's lecture concerns the declining status of classical language instruction in contemporary German education. In the modern age, classical study—much like logic—has been stripped of its formerly held “dignity of being the universal and almost exclusive means of education” and now a “universal voice raises itself against” it as essentially obsolete (*Werke* 4:315; *OCS*, 322). This “point of view . . . has little by little eroded (*abgesezt*) the [longstanding] claim of the study of [classical languages] to be considered the central science” (*Werke* 4:315; *OCS*, 322). This objection specifically concerns the externality of the classics to the lives of German youth:

The intimacy with which our own language belongs to us is lacking in the studies we possess only in a foreign one; these are separated from us by a partition (*Scheidewand*) which prevents them from truly finding a home in [the] minds [of students]. (*Werke* 4:315; *OCS*, 322)

The intrinsic externality of classical languages to the modern mind is a barrier between the student and whatever literary, moral, and philosophical content classical instruction may contain. Genuine knowledge can only be intimately grasped by German students if it is expressed in their natural tongue. This linguistic prejudice, coupled with the increasingly frequent degeneration of classical study “into a generic mechanism [and/or] degraded methods” of instruction has dragged classics below the level of “so-called matters of fact, among them everyday, sensory things” (*Werke* 4:315; *OCS*, 322–23).

Thus, classical language instruction has come to be seen as the imposition of an external abstraction on a mind already immersed in the ready-made German language; it is a mere mechanism that intrinsically lacks the immediacy, vivacity, and utility of the other sciences. This foreignness bars students from truly grasping whatever content classical study is meant to convey. However, Hegel does not dwell upon these degraded techniques and their consequences for long.

His primary concern in discussing the crisis of classical studies is to rise above this superficial rejection and bring attention to the “wise measures” recently proposed within German civil education (*Werke* 4:315; *OCS*, 323).⁶ These proposed changes represent no mere return to former pedagogical prac-

tices, nor do they rest upon some new “German” value being imported to classical instruction. Rather, classical training is being “secured as the fundamental basis of learned study” precisely by stripping it of its “exclusive character” as the central science and placing it simply “alongside [the other] educational materials and scientific methods” (*Werke* 4:316; *OCS*, 323).

As before, however, a clear problem arises. If classical instruction is no longer the exclusive pedagogical ground for the other sciences, then it will appear as an external abstraction from the more useful and immediate studies taught in German. How can it then securely hold its old position by being stripped of it? How can placing an abstract discipline in direct competition with more immediate studies avoid reinforcing the prejudice against it?

As in the *Logic*, Hegel argues that it is in fact isolation from the other sciences that reinvigorates classical studies. Formerly, it was presumed that knowledge of all practical and rudimentary things was contained within classical instruction. As such, classical study was constrained by its relations with matters of fact, as it was studied only with a view to its possible extensions into the “factual” or “practical” sciences. In contrast, the new method of “abstracting” classical study into its own realm within education, grants it “the possibility . . . to be able to develop itself [both] more freely and more completely. . . . Only what makes itself completely isolated in its own principle (*Nur was sich abgesondert in seinem Prinzip vollkommen macht*) becomes a consistent whole, i.e., it becomes *something*; it gains depth and the powerful possibility of versatility” (*Werke* 4:316–17; *OCS*, 323–24). Classical study for its own sake, abstracted from its possible unity with the other sciences, grants it the freedom to develop itself to its greatest depth.

It is in the pronouncement of this isolating principle, however, that we encounter a curious detour in Hegel’s account. Focusing as he does on the necessity of classical language instruction as a vital part of the study of classics (as opposed to works in translation) we would expect the grammatical, or some other specifically linguistic aspect, to be its differentiating principle. However, the principle Hegel proposes is the “excellence (*Vortrefflichen*)” of human spirit found in the classical age, wherein for the first time “the paradise of human spirit . . . has its depth . . . lying open in free clarity” (*Werke* 4:317–18; *OCS*, 324–25). Studying classical languages, abstracted from any immediate practicality, must first and foremost bring us into contact with the excellence of the human spirit.

This detour becomes somewhat more understandable when we learn that what Hegel calls the human spirit stands opposed to the “so-called practical subject-matter, this sensuous material that falls immediately into the child’s manner of picture thinking” (*Werke* 4:319; *OCS*, 325–26). Human excellence is found in our spiritual and mental life, not derived from our experience of the merely practical or sensuous. As such, the excellence of human spirit found in classics is “only the content of mind (*der geistige Inhalt*)” and, as such,

it is the most suitable material to train and exercise the student's mind in its own proper activities (*Werke* 4:319; *OCS*, 326).

Since classical education trains and nourishes us precisely because it expresses the excellence of our own minds, this excellence would also necessarily find expression in our natural language. Given this, Hegel must concede that it can be approximately conveyed in translation. If this is the case, what then would necessitate ancient language study at all? If the excellence expressed within classical languages is no less expressed within contemporary languages, why are we not entitled "to think that the culture of the modern world, our enlightenment and the progress of all arts and sciences . . . have surpassed their Greek and Roman infancy, and outgrown their old leading strings [and] can now walk upon their own land?" (*Werke* 4:317; *OCS*, 324).

Hegel's answer is that education is not merely a matter of content; it is also a matter of form. Training is not simply the digestion of certain pedagogically necessary facts and ideas. It is equally and more importantly the exercise and development of the form of thinking. Thus, having "spoken about the *material* (*Stoffe*) of education," we must now "say a few words about the *formal element* (*das Formelle*) which lies in its nature" (*Werke* 4:320; *OCS*, 327).

What classical instruction conveys is the excellence of mind which, as such, is what is most immediate to us. However, precisely as immediate, this excellence cannot be recognized as universal. In classical texts, the universality of our mind cannot be grasped when translated into our mother tongue for the simple reason that we are immediately "at home" in the particular expressions of the latter. While the excellence is itself universal, we find it presented within, and understand it as, a particular natural expression. Because it is precisely our immediate "at home-ness" in our mother tongue that prevents us from grasping the universality contained in its particular expressions, in order to make our universal mind explicit to ourselves we must become foreign to ourselves by confronting our spiritual excellence as something external. If education is the training and development of the mind, then the form of this training (training in itself) must begin with mind's "separation from its natural essence and condition, which [mind] itself seeks (*die Scheidung, die sie von ihrem natürlich Wesen und Zustand sucht*)" (*Werke* 4:321; *OCS*, 328). In other words, we must confront our own mind as an external abstraction.

The "partition . . . through which this separation . . . is achieved," Hegel claims, "is the world and language of the ancients," which, as sufficiently remote and alien to us, "separates us from ourselves" (*Werke* 4:321; *OCS*, 328).⁷ In translation, however, this alien world speaks to us in an all too familiar way. Thus, truly enacting the "universal necessity" of estrangement within educational development requires learning "the [ancient] world of idea[s] (*die Welt der Vorstellung*) as well as their language" (*Werke* 4:322; *OCS*, 328, my emphasis). Confronting our own minds in someone else's language estranges us from ourselves in an uncannily vivid fashion.

As a confrontation with our own mind in another's tongue, classical study requires a certain abstract, "mechanical" learning. These mechanical elements would, presumably, include the dry, rote memorization of vocabulary. However, Hegel focuses here on the fact that "the mechanical moments (*mechanischen Momente*) in language learning are immediately connected with *grammatical study* (*grammatische Studium*), whose value cannot be rated highly enough" (*Werke* 4:322; *OCS*, 328). At first, this high estimation of grammatical study seems odd since one's natural language is intrinsically grammatical and thus the learning of one's own language would constitute some manner of grammatical learning. Hegel even acknowledges that grammar is a central pedagogical concern for both Latin and German instruction. What, then, is particular to grammar that makes it an alienating necessity for learning? Moreover, how does grammatical training relate specifically to grasping the universality of mind?

Hegel defines grammar as "the categories [and] characteristic products and determinations of the understanding" (*Werke* 4:322; *OCS*, 329). In other words, (at least some of) the concepts and relations of our thinking mind *are* the concepts of grammar. This is partially evinced by the fact that some specific grammatical categories are universal across time and culture, a fact we are confronted with in learning ancient languages.⁸ These universal grammatical categories are the universal forms of thinking, which "*are in us* because understanding is our essence" and which find immediate expression in the various natural languages of individuals (*Werke* 4:323; *OCS*, 329). What Hegel means by grammar, then, is the universal form of thinking mind which finds expression in all natural languages.⁹

Because grammatical concepts are what are expressed in our natural language we understand them immediately—that is, as particular expressions. However, the fact that we speak grammatically and/or correctly interpret the expressions of others does not demonstrate knowledge of the *universal* grammar which concerns Hegel. To the contrary, a proper employment of any "surface" grammatical rule (e.g., correctly gendering our German substantives, etc.) is, like any lexical expression, a particular expression for a particular culture. It is understood immediately as expressing a representational idea, rather than a category or relation of thinking. In short, particular grammatical expressions cover over the universal grammatical categories that they express. Abstract grammatical study allows us to objectively grasp the universal categories (e.g., the substantive, the verb) and their imminent relations in themselves, according to their own principle.¹⁰

This formal study is achieved in its purest form in "grammatical study of an ancient language" (*Werke* 4:323; *OCS*, 330). In contrast to formal training in German, or even in living foreign languages like French, the study of a dead tongue never allows "unreflective habit [to lead] us to bring about the right coincidence of words (*die richtige Wortfügung herbeiführt*)" (*Werke* 4:323; *OCS*, 330). Unreflective speech, as consciously expressive only of particulars, expresses

universal relations between grammatical categories only accidentally. When one is reading works in an ancient language, "it is necessary to keep in view the significance of the parts of speech determined by the understanding, and call to [our] aid the rules of their combination" (*Werke* 4:323; *OCS*, 330). While one can imagine (and may even know) classicists with a facility to read Latin and Greek unreflectively, we need not share Hegel's bias toward the classics to grasp the basic point of the argument. Negotiating our way through a language that is unnatural to us prevents us from finding ourselves at home therein and forces us to begin the double process of the "perpetual subsuming of the particular under the universal and the particularization of the universals," and the more unnatural the language, the more conscious we become of that process (*Werke* 4:323; *OCS*, 330). Through this process, the universal concepts of grammatical mind are grasped in isolation and purity as objects in their own right and can consequently be recognized and concretized in particular expressions.

It is through this double process that we can find ourselves at home in the realm of abstraction; that is, we can learn to grasp and utilize the abstract universal concepts and relations of grammatical mind as the power and value of particular expressions. In short, grammatical study "constitutes the beginning of logical education" by teaching us the pure forms of (abstract) thinking, and can be "considered elementary philosophy" in that it makes us confront the perpetual subsumption and concretion of universals and particulars "in which the form of reason's activity exists" (*Werke* 4:322–23; *OCS*, 328–30).

III

This path of grammar, I contend, reveals to us the framework for developing a systematic philosophy of language through the dialectic of form and content. Language is phenomenally experienced as a set of "natural," particular words which, as Hegel puts it in the *Encyclopedia*, constitute the content, or "material (lexical) element (*das Material [das Lexikalische]*)" of language, whose universal categories and formal relations are concealed from us in the unconscious immediacy of natural expression.¹¹ This lexical, material element is sensuous and particular, rather than abstract and universal, and can only be studied as such. Thus, it is in the *Geist* works (i.e., the *Phenomenology* and, especially the *Philosophy of Mind*) that we must turn to seek an account of the "content" side of language, for it is precisely these texts that address the consciousness of particular sensuous materials. This analysis will ultimately demand the confrontation with language as alienating, mechanical, and abstract, revealing the concealment of the pure, universal "form (grammar)" of thought within linguistic expression (*Werke* 10: § 459). This "formal element of language (*Das Formelle der Sprache*) is the work of the understanding which imparts (*einbildet*) its categories into [language]" (*Werke* 10: § 459).¹² These formal categories of think-

ing, however, will necessarily appear as abstractions without substantial existence. Thus grammatical categories, developed on their own account, will arise in a confused form and will not be recognized as the essential structure of expression. It is in the greater and lesser *Logics* that we must seek an account of these abstract concepts developed according to their own principle.

If language consists of a material, particular lexicon and a formal, universal grammar, then a systematic philosophy of language must make both their opposition and unity explicit. Lexical content and its logical grammar must each be explored in isolation according to their own principles, and their immediate unity must be dissolved into a reflected dichotomy. No less, however, does this opposition demand synthesis, and it is only through such a synthesis that an explicitly Hegelian philosophy of language can arise. In other words, a systematic philosophy of language is not merely an analysis of the constitutive parts of any or all languages; it is moreover and essentially a systematic program for *mastering* languages. It is not enough to inhabit and utilize a lexicon that manages to express mental ideas to others, nor is it sufficient to determinately catalogue all the universal grammatical categories and relations that are transformed into expressive content. To determine how language functions as a sensuous expression of thought, we must systematically determine the manner in which particular words are subsumed by universal categories, as well as how logical categories are concretized into material expressions.¹³ To do so, we shall have to relate the *Geist* and *Logic* texts to each other *on linguistic terms*. To relate these texts to each other through their linguistic elements is to develop an explicitly Hegelian theory of language, or a linguistic system.

In the preface to the second edition of the *Logic*, Hegel writes: “what we make into language and express through language contains, whether concealed (*eingehüllter*), confused (*vermischter*) or made explicit (*herausgearbeitet*), a category” (*Werke*: 5:20; Miller, 31). These three moments—the particular expressions within which a universal category lies concealed (*Geist*), the universal categories that must be grasped in confusing abstraction from their concrete employment (logic), and the explicit determination of universal categories within particular expressions (system)—constitute Hegelian linguistics. The study of the first must reveal the necessary presence of the second, the imminent development of which demands the third. Only by explicitly determining the systematic relations between the realms of formal abstraction and material content can we justifiably claim to have developed a truly Hegelian, which is to say genuine, linguistic system.¹⁴

NOTES

1. This view resonates with the investigative starting point of Jean Hyppolite (*Logic and Existence*, trans. L. Lawlor and A. Sen [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997]), although he ultimately concludes that Hegel’s texts do not contain

such a system. The very possibility of such a system is denied by Daniel Cook (*Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* [The Hague: Mouton, 1973]) precisely because, as “the medium for expressing the dialectical process of experience in general,” language “is *too basic* a category to . . . be treated ‘in and for itself,’ and only if it were so treated . . . could one speak of ‘Hegel’s Philosophy of Language’” (184, emphasis added).

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 20 vols. and index (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969ff.), 5:36; *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1989), 28. Further references will be given in the form *Werke* 5:36; Miller, 28. I have revised the English translations of all cited works by Hegel and give the page numbers to them only for convenience.

3. For a classic discussion of the concepts of “linguistic competence” and “surface grammar” in generative linguistics see Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: MIT, 1965).

4. G. W. F. Hegel, “Rede zum Schuljahresabschluss am 29. September 1809,” *Werke* 4:312–26; “On Classical Studies,” trans. R. Kroener in *Early Theological Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1948), 321–30. Further references will be given in the form *Werke* 4:312; *OCS*, 321.

5. This is a concern that dominated Hegel’s early thoughts about language, and his conclusions regarding it appear to have remained virtually unchanged from his earliest writings forward. For a brief but thorough recounting of Hegel’s thoughts on language in his youthful writings, see Cook, 15–18.

6. The measures were those initiated by Hegel’s friend Niethammer. For details on both the reforms and their mixed public reception, see *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 186–232.

7. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. J. Weisenheimer and D. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1998) for a discussion of Hegel’s place in the historical development of the concept of *Bildung* as “sacrificing particularity for the sake of the universal” (12). Of course, for Hegel this sacrifice is made with the express purpose of finding the universal within one’s own particular expressions, as we shall discuss below.

8. This places Hegel in dialogue with the universal grammarians of his day, as well as with their critics. This should not surprise us, since the contention that logic and grammar are intimately related or even identical was fairly commonplace in Hegel’s time, as was the backlash of linguistic relativism. For an excellent survey of this debate and its origins, see Peter H. Salus, “Universal Grammar 1000–1850,” in *History of Linguistic Thought and Contemporary Linguistics*, ed. Herman Parrett (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), 85–101. While Hegel was undoubtedly influenced by much of this debate, and even seems to have taken sides with Humboldt to some degree within it, Hegel’s conception of logic remains somewhat unique and thus comparisons to his contemporaries are of only limited value.

9. Cook, despite recognizing in this a “profound reason for . . . linguistic studies” of Hegel, immediately abandons his exploration of grammar and immediately switches his focus to the role that signs play in Hegel’s account of language, and how these linguistic signs are developed by Hegel into an account of subjective expression (Cook, 20). From this point on, grammar plays no role in Cook’s reconstructions of Hegel’s dialectic of language. Placing content over form is a surprisingly common trait among

Hegel's linguistic commentators. Rather than listing all those commentaries within which grammar fails to find a place, I would like to draw attention to the reading presented by John McCumber (*The Company of Words* [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993]) as it explicitly focuses on the "non-expressive" elements of language. McCumber argues that philosophical expression is ultimately achieved in the systematic development of two separate yet related vocabularies: "representational names" (i.e., the words of a natural language used by philosophers) and "names as such" (i.e., names as mere sounds, abstracted from their representational meanings). However, he argues both that the latter cannot be "bound to fixed grammars and meanings" (316) if they are to have the "plasticity" required for "philosophical" expression, and that the complete set of the former, while meaningfully expressive, nevertheless "lacks syntax and grammar [and is thus] a [mere] vocabulary, not a true language" (228). One is left wondering how Hegel's company of words can be either expressive or philosophically determinate without an account of their syntactic structures.

10. Hegel names the subject and the verb as the fundamental grammatical categories, through which thoughts "are stamped with objective form" (*Werke* 5:20; Miller, 32). It is thus from these basic categories that the rich set of relations that constitute universal grammar must be developed.

11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften III*, *Werke* 10: § 459; *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), § 459. Further references will be given in the form, *Werke* 10: § 459.

12. For context, we may say that this definition of grammar moves Hegel beyond the minimal one provided by J. G. Fichte, i.e., the mere "combination of several words" ("On the Linguistic Capacity and the Origin of Language," trans. J. Surber in Jere Surber, *Language and German Idealism: Fichte's Linguistic Philosophy* [Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1996], 134) and into closer relation with that of W. von Humboldt, who claims that the grammatical form of any natural language universally "arises from the laws of thinking" (*On Language*, trans. P. Heath [New York: Cambridge, 1988], 140). Again, however, we must recall Hegel's unique conception of logic before taking any comparison too far.

13. There are connections, here, to the account of language and universals presented in John Burbidge, "Language and Recognition," in *Method and Speculation in Hegel's Phenomenology*, ed. Merold Westphal (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1982), 85–94. Abstracting to grammar moves us beyond our linguistic and cultural relativisms, to be sure, but no less demonstrates the need for thought to be concretized within a lived language. Although Burbidge's account sometimes focuses too strongly on the universal moment, we are in agreement that the linguistically aware individual "using words as categories . . . appreciates both the strengths and limitations of their particular context" (93).

14. I wish to thank Jay Lampert, Brigitte Sassen, and John Burbidge for their generous and helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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CHAPTER 9

The Logic of Language Change

David Kolb

We live within spaces of possibilities with varying degrees of normativity: social rules and expectations, linguistic grammars, artistic genres, conceptual systems, place norms, scientific methods, and the like. They all change. I would like to explore some issues that arise as part of a larger investigation about how sets of possibilities and normative structures are established, extended, and changed. Here I want to talk about how the kinds of transitions Hegel studies might relate to empirical changes in language systems.¹

I. LANGUAGE CHANGES

There are many types of language change. There are, for instance, large, slow changes such as the loss of Germanic noun declensions in English.² Pervasive as such changes are, they do not alter the kind of social meaning and norms Hegel is concerned about.³ Also, these pervasive changes happen at a much slower pace than social and conceptual change.

There are quicker and more socially substantive changes of syntax and grammatical rules, for instance variations in the French use of *vous/tu*, or new politeness levels in Japanese verbs. These may or may not be involved in the kinds of changes Hegel wants to discuss. Hegel is concerned about changes that can show up less in a language's grammatical machinery than in its basic categories and social norms. Such changes may come in new theories (about atoms, for instance, or about God), or in new social practices (Roman legal personality, altered gender roles), or in the development of new virtues and values (Stoic indifference, Christian humility).

There are also those self-conscious and quick changes that occur when a poet or a thinker creates new metaphors that cross-breed language areas and alter the truth value of sentences (John is a lion; Juliet is the sun, she would burn you if you came too close; philosophy is an illness, and so on).

Hegel, for his part, discusses sequences of dialectical moves. First, there are the transitions in the *Logic*, as pure notions develop into one another in different ways, without temporal reference.

Then there are the transitions among shapes of consciousness and spirit discussed in the *Phenomenology*, which are temporally embodied, but do not seem to be mutually exclusive. Different shapes are able to coexist, as in the Enlightenment and Culture descriptions, and one general shape, such as Master/Slave, might recur within different historical periods. Then there are transitions involving the overall stages of historical development in society, and in art, religion, and philosophy, which are more exclusive and sequential. How do such Hegelian transitions relate to empirical language systems and their changes?

II. LANGUAGE SYSTEMS

In what sense might we speak of language as a system? From among the bewildering array of notions of systematicity,⁴ I have employed one straightforward notion derived from logic and common in recent analytic philosophy. In this view a language system is a network of normatively licensed connections among sentences. Asserting sentence A makes it admissible (or necessary, or forbidden) to assert sentence B. The network of connections can be described in terms of the usual relations of formal logic, but with the addition of a set of material inferences that give the content of concepts and so codify connections other than those of formal logic.⁵ Still other norms (what Wilfrid Sellars called “language entry” and “language exit” rules) connect sentences to observations and actions. The system can also include the kind of connections that Austin and Grice discuss, where it is not the content said so much as its relation to the situation of its utterance that licenses further sentences.

A language system, in this sense, is not just a set of historical connections between actual utterances or inscriptions. It includes the norms that license both the actual connections and other possible ones. The relation between the norms and the empirical instances can be described as a type/token relation. A general example might be “If a sentence of type A affirms the presence of properties P, and a sentence of type B affirms the presence of properties Q, then the utterance of a token of type A licenses the utterance of a token of type B.”⁶

For the moment put aside the question whether language is to be seen as a single huge interlocking system or as a bundle of smaller and somewhat independent systems. Opposed to the idea of language as a large holistic network there are Wittgensteinian and deconstructive reactions that see language as an agglomeration of smaller more or less independent language games. I will have more to say about this at the end of this essay.

In a language system, a word or a concept is what it does. As in chess the bishop is defined as the piece that can move in a certain way within the framework of the game, so in a language system a word or concept is a piece that allows certain moves of affirmation and inference. Through these relations concepts reach out in many directions. These sprawling connections of concepts in a language system contrast with the tight coupling of Hegel's dialectical concepts.⁷

This notion of language system can, at best, codify a synchronic slice of a natural language's history. But this limitation means that watching changes in sentence connections might provide a way of seeing the transitions Hegel discusses.

Language systems, then, are here taken as inferential networks, after the manner of Sellars and Quine and, more recently, Robert Brandom.⁸ My claim will be that Hegel's dialectical transitions and sequences are not the same as the (formal and material) inferential linkages in such systems, and yet Hegel's transitions are embodied in the contingencies of those systems and their changes.

III. HEGELIAN TRANSITIONS AND LANGUAGE SYSTEM CHANGES

In a language system concepts are interdefined by the relations among them (for instance the net of inferences connecting obligation and permission, or individual and ownership, or Bossie's being a cow to Bossie not being a pig or dog). A concept's identity and meaning depend on the connections it licenses. Those connections reach widely, touching all the various sentences whose assertability might be affected by the assertion of a particular proposition. Individuality is connected not just with ownership but with political, ethical, artistic, legal, and ontological ranges of propositions, among others. Bossie's being a cow connects to biological, economic, poetic, and other sorts of propositions.

Hegelian dialectical moves, on the other hand, offer tight interconstitution by opposition and contradiction among logical categories, and among the moments within shapes of consciousness and spirit. Dialectical dependencies, transitions, and sequences have a strict order of self-determination and so stand in tighter connections than do concepts in loose-limbed language systems.

This contrast depends on describing empirical concepts as having widely spread inferential connections. But what if the empirical concept of, say, "individual" is really a family of tight concepts, each bound within an area such as law, politics, worship, or art? If the concept in Hegel's sense was embodied in the whole family, the contrast would still stand. But then which one would it be? And how would its influence relate to the others in the family? If it had no influence on them, then this supposed Hegelian-empirical concept would be irrelevant to other empirical concepts, which defeats the point of the *Logic*.

Yet any mechanism of influence would anoint a privileged empirical area of language, which seems unrealistic.

Furthermore, all Hegel's logical concepts are of the whole—definitions of the Absolute—and that whole becomes more complex and mediated as the *Logic* moves from Being through the categories of essence to the Absolute Idea. More moments are explicitly posited in more complex relationships, but this growth is not the same as moving around among nodes in a network that is fully determined from the beginning. The same is true of shapes of consciousness and stages of spirit. They are internally articulated wholes rather than single nodes in a network, and the moves among their moments and the transitions to new shapes and stages are more like redeterminations of the whole than moves within an already determinate whole. So Hegel's logical self-determinations and transitions are not a privileged subset of the inferential moves within a single language system. It would be fairer to say that they have something to do with movement between language systems.

A logical concept can be embodied in the net of connections in a language system. It can also show up in certain special propositions within or about the system, as I suggest later. A dialectical transition, on the other hand, does not appear in propositions, even ones reporting tensions and contradictions. Rather it is embodied in the change or reconfiguration of the whole language system.

Still, we cannot too quickly identify dialectical transitions with changes in language systems. A language system changes when new pieces are added to the game, or the rules are revised. The pieces and rules can be altered in most any direction at most any time. But Hegelian dialectical transitions have a strict order of self-generation.⁹ Their nested structure of self-becoming is not the same as the ad hoc ways a language system can be modified.

Because in a language system a concept gets its meaning from its connections, and those connections extend more widely than the strict couplings of the dialectic, and because the system is open to ad hoc additions, the system provides ways for users to maneuver around dialectical tensions. Inconsistencies or contradictions in a language system do not automatically lead to changes; they can be encapsulated and dealt with pragmatically as the system continues to function. Recall the ways in which set theory after Russell's paradox continued to be used, and was stimulated to redevelop itself. Or consider for example the logical move leading from the notion of being-for-itself to the notion of indefinitely many such units. It is possible to stay with only the first concept even though it opens the move to the other. The invitation can be ignored or resisted on condemned, as is proved by the continued existences of many systems of philosophy whose basic concepts Hegel claims have been superseded.

Furthermore, it seems clear that *not all* changes in language systems embody Hegelian transitions. For instance, the introduction of metaphors such "Juliet is the sun" alters sentence connections but need not embody large

transitions of spirit or logic. On the other hand, some new metaphors or new poems do carry major religious or moral changes. A new theory in physics or biology might change many sentence connections within physics and some in ordinary language, but still be within the same shape of consciousness or stage of spirit. But some changes in science are part of major revolutions. A new virtue, such a "coolness" might cause new connections among sentences to develop, without altering a people's basic categories about individuality or their shape of consciousness. Yet other new virtues, for instance those introduced in the shift from pagan to Christian religion, embody new stages of spirit. So not all changes of language system embody Hegelian transitions. But some do.

On the other hand, *all* Hegelian transitions *will* involve changes in language system.¹⁰ There must be some changes in sentences connections and in the texture of behavior, which is derivatively linguistic. If there were no changes in language, the Hegelian transitions would have no actuality. Hegel claims that language is the *Dasein* of spirit. Indeed, Hegel says, "To each abstract moment of science corresponds a shape of manifest spirit as such. Just as in its existence (*daseiende Geist*) is not richer than science, so too it is not poorer either in content"¹¹

It is important to remember that those language system changes that embody Hegelian transitions need not be total. They might leave large tracts of language untouched. The transition from monarchy to civil society does not alter the way we talk about bathtubs, or the rules of chess, or advice on the care of rose bushes. In Greek, after a new notion of individuality appears with the Sophists and Socrates many new things could be said and new questions could be asked, yet many old connections remained unchanged.

There is no easy way to identify those language system changes that embody Hegelian transitions merely by looking at the language systems. We cannot, for instance, just count the number of sentence connections changed, since even very minor inferential changes could affect a potential infinity of sentences.

We might try to apply Quine's metaphor of the great net, whose more central areas (such as logic, math, physics) are connected to many other areas while the peripheries are more local in their connections. Changes in those central areas would be the equivalent of Hegelian transitions. But consider that many changes in Greek physics and logic do not embody a Hegelian transition even though they are in a central area, while, on the other hand, the change from torn to conscience language in the Culture section of the *Phenomenology* does embody a Hegelian transition even though it is not the central area.

So, determining which language changes reflect Hegelian transitions demands some independent access to the Hegelian movements. This is surely what Hegel would say, given his emphasis upon systematic constructions in pure thought.

IV. THE *DASEIN* OF SPIRIT

In effect we are asking what Hegel means when he says that language is the *Dasein* of spirit. This claim occurs in the *Phenomenology*.¹² In his discussion of Conscience Hegel says, "We see language as the existence (*Dasein*) of Spirit. Language is self-consciousness existing for others, self-consciousness which as such is immediately present, and as this self-consciousness is universal" (Hegel 1977, § 652).¹³

Here, as in his philosophy of spirit, Hegel can seem to be claiming that language is a secondary externalization of some already complete inner meaning. However, Hegel says that there is no finished internal meaning to take up external clothing. In good dialectical fashion it is the externalization that accomplishes the successful internalization of definite content. "We only know our thoughts, only have definite actual thoughts, when we give them the form of objectivity, of a being distinct from our inwardness, and therefore the shape of externality, and of an externality, too, that at the same time bears the stamp of the highest inwardness. The articulated sound, the word, is such an inward externality . . . the word gives to thoughts their highest and truest existence."¹⁴

So the sense in which language is the *Dasein* of spirit is not so far from the logical notion of *Dasein* as determinate being. It is in language that thoughts become determinate for us.

In his discussion of the role of habits in the formation of selfhood, Hegel shows that he is not describing some pure self-presence that then externalizes itself. "Thinking, too, however free and active in its own pure element it becomes, no less requires habit and familiarity . . . by which it is the property of my single self where I can freely and in all directions range. It is through this habit that I come to realize my existence as a thinking being" (Hegel 1971, § 410).¹⁵

My self and my meaning are not purely mine at any one instant. The self gains its *Existenz* through habitual actions that cannot be fully self-present acts. Now, language systems and their regularities are examples of such habits. A language system is not a set of pure self-transparent, self-conscious instants of rule obedience but rather a set of habits. These become self-conscious when avowed, or when used to evaluate another's linguistic performance, or sometimes when the habits change.

These considerations clarify Hegel's view of the relation between my empirical thoughts and my empirical language. They show that Hegel is not treating language as the externalization of some already definite inner meaning. But these considerations do not yet clarify the relation of empirical language to the Hegelian logical categories and shapes of consciousness themselves, which are not simply my empirical thoughts. Hegelian unities such as categories and shapes of consciousness and their transitions seem to be more

pervasive, on a higher level than empirical language systems (or on a deeper level, if you prefer that spatial metaphor).¹⁶

It is well known how Hegel makes explicit claims about the way in which the stages of spirit's development (in history, in philosophy, in religion) correlate with his logical transitions. So if we are looking for a way to understand the relation between empirical language changes and Hegelian transition, we might think in terms of levels. Perhaps Hegelian transitions should be thought of as happening on a higher level that provides form and guidance for changes on a lower level. Just as a language system includes connections among particular sentences but also general rules about sentence types, so we might see Hegel's stages, shapes, and categories as yet higher-level rules that in turn govern the sentence connections in language systems. The higher-level rules would themselves come in levels: there would be shapes of consciousness that guide language system rules, then stages of spirit that guide shapes of consciousness, then logical categories as guides for the stages of spirit, and finally the absolute idea as the guide for the sequence of logical categories.

Though it may seem appealing, this levels reading goes badly astray. There are two related defects, the idea of influence flowing from level to level, and the interpretation of Hegel's categories as rules governing instances.

The levels reading suggests that as sets of language rules and empirical connections develop, the *Logic* guides their development, or gives it form. But terms such as "giving form" and "guide," like "levels," are deceptive. The metaphor of levels suggests that each level could be a process complete on its own, though guided by a higher level. But there is no self-enclosed meta-level guiding or forming.¹⁷ There is no cause and effect relation here. Language is the *Dasein* of spirit, not an *effect* of spirit.¹⁸

We don't go *from* the Hegelian transitions *to* the language changes. We could rather say that the language system changes occur *in* the space of the Hegelian transitions.¹⁹ What Hegel is talking about is not a higher process that does something to a lower process, or that produces or influences a product on a lower level. For Hegel there is only one process, and it has no product. The process of self-determination, self-division, self-return is and presents only itself. What is grasped in the *Logic* is not a recipe for producing something else, but the form and the motion of its own self-grasping. Thought thinking itself.²⁰ "The manifestation of itself to itself is therefore itself the content of spirit and not, as it were, only a form externally added to the content; consequently spirit, by its manifestation, does not manifest a content different from its form, but manifests its form which expresses the entire content of spirit, namely, its self-manifestation" (Hegel 1971, § 383z).

Nor is this process studied from some separate meta-point-of-view. When independent access to its necessities becomes available they may be studied in a formal way—but that formal study is itself a moment in the process, not a separate meta-process.²¹ Hegel refuses to take sides in the oppositions of form and

content, or structure and process. The absolute idea does not deliver a separable structure of process. Nor does it show off a process that reworks structures. The overall process of determination is the process of becoming-for-itself in its shape and moments. Its determinations are not its products; they are its being.

V. RULES AND EMBODIMENTS

Yet if there is only one process, there still seem to be two aspects or phases or *somethings*. In some sense the Hegelian transitions seem higher and controlling. This is why it is tempting to read them as rules governing particular instances. I suggest that we read them instead as embodied in the contingent particularities of language systems. Consider this question: "Surely it is not necessary within the one process of self-manifestation that Latin verbs come at the end of sentences, or that the torn shape of consciousness of Rameau's nephew be expressed in rules for the connections of this and that particular types of French sentences?"

This should remind us of other questions, such as "Surely it is not necessary within the self-development of spirit that spiders have eight legs?" We know how Hegel answers that kind of question, by an appeal to a necessary contingency in the embodiment of necessary features. Hegel thinks that mobility can be understood as a necessary property of the animal organism when the category of life from the *Logic* is developed in the externality of space and time.²² But this or that organism's particular mode of mobility is contingent. That it uses legs as opposed to wings or treads is contingent, that there are eight legs is contingent, as is the particular history of the legs on this individual spider.

Similarly we might say that it is in and through this "body" of language that the torn shape of consciousness has its *Dasein*, but that it is contingent that the torn consciousness is expressed in these particular sentence types linked with those others. Just as there would be no spider without the contingent history that presented it with eight legs, there would be no torn consciousness, and no self-presentation of spirit, without the contingent details of language history. So there is the torn shape of consciousness with the necessary relations among its moments, which are embodied in such and such contingent social activities and communications, which are expressed in such and such particular language system details, which are found in the individual statements of Rameau's nephew on a particular occasion.

The Hegelian categories and shapes are not members or roles within a language system except as incarnated in sets of looser-limbed connections. The contingencies are such that there is no way to isolate this or that inferential move and say that it represents the entirety of the Hegelian unity involved. The category and its constitutive others are embodied in connections none of

which have the strict necessity of the dialectical transitions. There is no pure presence of the dialectical categories within the empirical language system.

Similarly, changes in language systems can embody transitions among Hegelian categories and shapes, again with contingencies all through. For Hegel a transition between two stages of spirit's historical development, say from Greece to Rome, happens through and in a mass of historical details and motivations none of which present the transition in its purity.

At first glance, this might seem to reaffirm the idea that the relation of Hegelian categories and transitions to empirical language systems is a higher version of the relation of general rules to particular instances. But this is not so. The relation of the pure category or the pure transition to the language system or to its changes is not the relation of a rule to the instances it governs. If you want to think of the logical category as a rule, then you must think that the rule, too, is embodied in the language system. It is embodied in the inferential relations—in the system, not in one chosen essential relation.

It is through such embodiment that the one process of self-manifestation exists. It has no Platonic being as a purely logical self-development. The logic is an abstraction from the full concreteness of the process. Indeed there are several different kinds of abstraction at work. Because they do not consider the particularities of their embodiment, the Hegelian categories and shapes and their transitions are more abstract than the detailed sentence connections and rules in a language system. On the other hand, language systems as inferential nets are in a different way more abstract than the Hegelian categories and transitions, because the language system description disengages inferential and connective structure from the concrete process of its actualization and life.²³

VI. EMBODIMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS

We need to look more closely at the term “embodiment.” Is this a Platonic dualism of logical souls piloting linguistic bodies? No, and we have to avoid cause-effect terms, because there is no relation here between two separate entities. But then, at the other extreme, are the logical categories merely epiphenomena of empirical causes and processes that go their own way?

An option between these extremes would be to say that the dialectical determinations are, in Aristotelian terms, formal causes. They make something be the kind of thing it is. In a way this is right, but there are serious problems. If the dialectical determinations were formal causes they would presuppose a related material cause. In the case of language systems, this matter would be words and propositions. But if there are formal causes organizing that linguistic matter, they are the local grammar and language system, and not directly the dialectical concepts and transitions.

The local language system is the *Dasein* of the logical categories, not their effect. Nor will any of the standard dualities that get criticized in the *Logic* correctly describe this relation. The relation is somewhat like that between the *Logic* and the *Realphilosophie*, but in a fuller sense it is the relation between the whole system and empirical items. This involves a relation between Hegel's systematic account and other accounts of the being and becoming of language systems.

Consider again the analogy with animal bodies. The number of legs an animal has is not just a brute fact; it is a product of evolutionary processes in nature. Those processes may have contingent initial conditions, and be full of random events, but there are lineages to be traced and stories to be told within them, stories about causation and function.

So too in language, which sentences connect to which other sentences is not just a brute fact but the product of a host of other different processes. There are histories of the way language drifts through changes in pronunciations, acquires or loses grammatical features, alters the meaning of many words and ends up with its particular verbal and written signs. These could explain why Rameau's nephew pronounces French the way he does, and why the word *honneur* has picked up its particular connotations.²⁴ Other histories could explain, perhaps based on religious traditions and feudal relationships, just why the torn language of Rameau's nephew gets embodied in the particular set of French sentence types that it does. Still other histories could illuminate why Rameau's nephew and his friend utter the particular sentence tokens that they do on a Monday afternoon.

For the animal, natural selection is a coming together of many separate causal processes. The logical category of life contributes no additional causal influence. Nonetheless, through natural selection a being emerges that is of that sort, a being embodying the category of life.

For the language system, linguistic change is a coming together of many separate causal processes. The logical category of, say, substance contributes no additional causal influence. Nonetheless, through linguistic change a language system emerges that is of that sort, one embodying the category of substance.²⁵

With both the animal body and the language system, the logical category describing its kind of being has dialectical relations to other logical categories. Those relations do not provide any additional causal factors. But they do indicate tendencies and tensions that open possibilities for change in the actual item.²⁶

For a language system the situation is more complex than for an animal because the language system is self-referential in a strong sense. It can describe and prescribe for itself, and be the object of self-instituted changes in its structures. It is in this self-reflection that the logical categories come to a more explicit expression.

Recall that for both Plato and Aristotle the empirical concepts that describe the qualities and relations of things are related to one another in a

tree-like hierarchy. But there are other concepts outside and beyond the tree of genera and species. Aristotle insists that “being” is not a genus. Plato talks about forms such as being, sameness, unity, and difference that affect every other form directly and not through hierarchical descent. These became what the medievals called “transcendental concepts” because their application transcends the hierarchical relations in the tree of genera and species. They touch directly every element of the system. They are ancestors of the Kantian transcendental and the Hegelian logical categories. Such concepts are not normally involved in direct predication; they show up as modifiers and modalities, and in the use of the copula. But they can also be predicated in very general rule-like statements about being, sameness, unity, possibility, and the like—what Stephan Körner once described as “transcategorical principles”—such as “If X is a being it is unified (or, is an actualized potential, or is a monad, etc.).”²⁷

It is in these sorts of statements and in the tensions that might emerge within and among them that the Hegelian logical determinations come closest to appearing nakedly within a language system. Yet even here the dialectical determinations are not identical with these statements or rules. Tensions in transcategorical statements can be worked around just as can other tensions within a language system. So even such statements do not give the purity of the logical concepts and their necessary dialectical developments.²⁸

We can ask what the dialectical concept or transition adds to the empirical details and rules of the language system. We might take a clue from Hegel’s discussion of traditional logic. The mediations and self-determinations described in the speculative treatment of the judgment and syllogism in the doctrine of the Concept do not provide all the details of formal logic even as it existed in Hegel’s day. Hegel is not giving a deduction (in Kant’s *quid juris* sense) of the formal logical patterns. He is rather showing what he takes to be the logical (in his sense) mediations embodied in those patterns, though the whole movement cannot be embodied in any single formal pattern or linear concatenation of those patterns. The result is not to justify or vindicate the traditional syllogistic forms, which can be shown to be valid on their own, but to indicate a wider process of self-manifesting reason that is embodied in those forms. Analogous points apply to the relation of dialectical determinations to the patterns of linguistic grammar and the inferential patterns of linguistic systems.

But are not the logical concepts given a pure presentation in the language system of the *Logic* itself? I would argue, to the contrary, that the language of the logical presentation is not a single language system, but rather a meta-discussion of a sequence of transcategorical principles that can be embodied in or expanded into language systems. The logical meta-discussion itself does not stay with one fixed vocabulary but changes its descriptive terms as the *Logic* moves along. For instance, the notion of mediation grows more complex as the

three parts of the *Logic* progress. There is, though, a final vocabulary that describes the logical method in the absolute idea. This might be read as specifying a restricted language system, but nothing is *said* in this system except its description of its own movements. And it describes movements that, when they are carried out, are performed according to versions of its methodological notions that are either less determinate (in earlier sections of the *Logic*) or more determinate (in the various spheres of the *Realphilosophie*). So even in the most self-transparent part of Hegel's account we are dealing not with a single language system but with movement among many related systems, and those movements are not describable by a single set of inference rules. So there is no one final empirical language system being presented.

VII. THE UNITIES OF LANGUAGE

There are a number of criticisms that could be raised against the Hegelian scheme that I have been describing, and I am sympathetic with some of them.²⁹ Most of the criticisms are, though, really about more general issues, such as necessity and purity of the logical sequence. I would like to raise here an issue more closely tied to the question of language systems.

As I pointed out earlier, there is much that can be said to explain why a language system might have the particular set of sentence connections that it does. The externality and mutual independence of the various causal stories recall the issue postponed earlier, namely, whether language is one monolithic net of inference and sentence connections, or a bundle of smaller networks or language games. This issue showed up when we considered the way language systems can maneuver around internal tensions and contradictions. It appeared again when we noticed that not all sentence connections alter when a new scientific theory or new moral concept is introduced.

Language does not have such a tight systematic unity that a change in one place forces changes everywhere else. Some of its flexibility comes from that looseness of internal connection among areas, and the ease of adding new elements and new relations. Some language games are related *externally* to one another. Of course, local language games get commented on and reinterpreted by other language games. But the totality of language games is more like a society of people talking about each other than like a vast machine with all its parts interlocking in order. There is interaction, but also the different parts may stand in external relations that are foreign to Hegel's dialectical unities.

If the social embodiment of language is a motley in this way, its overall togetherness needs to be properly conceived. Here Hegel may have problems with some of his higher unities. The diversity of language games and the ways that they can change or not independently of one another may undercut the unity of his larger civilizational stages of spirit. Hegel's *Logic* could still give

an appropriate description of the moments of concrete self-presentation in language and spirit. But some of the unities that Hegel finds corresponding to aspects of the logical structure should be suspect.

Hegel was aware of the contemporary mixture of different stages and shapes of consciousness in his own society. This is clear from his writings about the social and political situation in Germany, and from his attempts to urge the Prussian government toward a more modern shape. However, Hegel conceptualized his situation as living at the slow death of one era and the difficult birth of another new social whole. He still thought of those wholes as teleological totalities.

While Hegel is open to the dispersed *spatial* coexistence of natural structures and events that embody very different dialectical categories, he totalizes *temporal* stages, at least within single civilizations.³⁰ For him the variety of language games, and an era's politics, philosophy, religion, society, culture, and art all get shoehorned into one contemporary stage of spirit. Considering the separate histories and the external relations among language games, we should be suspicious of his large totalizing unities such as particular national spirits and overall stages of spirit. Without such large unities, Hegel's logical categories and repeatable shapes of consciousness might be enough to provide insight into the processes of self-manifestation, and their togetherness in actual language's *Dasein* might be different from what Hegel imagined.³¹

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Angelica Nuzzo, Stephan Houlgate, and John McCumber for valuable comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

2. For another example, consider the way that proto-Indo-European differentiated into Latin and German that put verbs at the end of sentences, English and Spanish that put verbs between subject and object, and Irish and Breton that put verbs at the beginning of sentences.

3. Grammatical changes may indirectly affect concepts and norms by altering what aspects of situations speakers are required to notice and emphasize, or by making some things easier and other things harder to say.

4. In philosophy we are familiar with Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Hegel, the Neo-Kantians, the Logical Positivists, and so on, with their different notions of what counts as a system in thought or language. In linguistics, there are ways of organizing grammatical systems around Latin and Greek paradigms, the combinatoric way Sanskrit grammar was codified, recent Chomskian and other generative grammars, and many others. In logic there are specifications of formal systems, language à la Foucault as discourse and power strategies, Deleuzian abstract machines, and recent theories of self-organizing adaptive systems of which language would be a part.

5. Examples of material inference would be "This is green, so it is colored," "Maine is north of Boston, so Boston is south of Maine." The notion of material inferences is most familiar from Sellars, though it has a long history in rationalist philoso-

phers from Plato through Leibniz and Frege. See Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 94–111.

6. It might seem that discussing sentence connections overlooks those changes that come with the introduction of new *words*, and Hegel's transitions often involve the introduction of new words, or of social unities and mediations that create new words. But the net of sentence connections is sensitive to word change. Redefinition of old words changes patterns of sentence connection (for instance, consider the changes wrought by Spinoza's notion of substance or by postmodern redefinitions of irony). Introduction of new words brings new sentences into the mix (for instance, sentences containing the word "email"). New words can also alter older connections even for sentences not containing the new words (for instance, the introduction of Christian virtue words might alter the connections among sentences discussing personal identity and social honor, even though none of those sentences mentioned the words "humility" or "charity").

7. There are issues about the relation of words and concepts as differential features of propositions, and about whether amid the multitude of connections in a language system some could be taken as more essential than the others. Hegel could be read as proposing such an essentialism, but I think that the embodiment of dialectical concepts in empirical language inference rules is not so direct and one-to-one.

8. Brandom surrounds the inferential network with a Sellarsian penumbra of interlocking communal avowals and evaluations. These acts and statements could be called meta-language, in the sense that they are about linguistic practices and performances rather than directly about objects. This is a richer notion of meta-language than that emerging from formal logic. Brandom sees connections with Hegel's discussion in the *Phenomenology* about how the community comes to make explicit its own practices and internal mediations. See Brandom 1994, ch. 9 and p. 716n35.

9. Emphasizing the order of self-generation helps dispel the mistaken impression that the Hegelian process is a Bradleyan block superintendence.

10. It is true that Hegel says that the prepositional form is not adequate to express the whole truth, and he distrusts the argumentative style of doing philosophy by proving single propositions. But still, his dialectical process does work with propositions and the dialectic puts them in new kinds of relations, where asserting A does lead to asserting B, though not by a standard argument, and without B being a self-sufficient "conclusion."

11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952); *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), § 805. All references are by paragraph, using the Miller numbering.

12. In the *Phenomenology* the word *Dasein* is used in many different senses. For instance, *Dasein* signifies externality as opposed to inwardness (§ 641, § 756), space (§ 45), living or animal organic existence (§ 292), concrete *Wirklichkeit* as opposed to abstractions (§ 47), outward unfolding (§ 53), being for others (§ 327), the pure self (§ 671). In the usage relevant here *Dasein* emphasizes the historical and intersubjective actuality of language, through which the spirit is out there and mutually recognized. For this usage, see § 490, § 521, § 633, § 666, § 667, § 770, § 793.

13. The quotation in the text seems to be a phonocentric glorification of immediate presence, but this impression is softened by what follows in the passage ("It is the self that separates itself from itself, which as pure I=I becomes objective to itself, which

in this objectivity equally preserves itself as this self, just as it coalesces directly with other selves and is their self-consciousness. It perceives just as it is perceived by others, and the perceiving is just existence [*Dasein*] which has become a self.”) Also we should consider what Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia* about habit and mechanical memory and, in the *Logic*, about presence and immediately as the product of mediation.

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopedie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* (the 1830 version) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1959); *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), § 462z. References by paragraph number. “The name [Hegel gives lion as an example, so he means general terms, not just proper names], as giving and existence to the content in intelligence, is the externality of intelligence to itself; and the inwardizing or recollection of the name . . . is at the same time a self-externalization to which intelligence reduces itself on its own ground. We *think* in names. (*Es ist in Nahmen, dass wir denken.*)” § 462.

15. Note that Hegel says the habitual self that is described in this text is not yet the self-present ego. “This abstract realization of the soul in its corporeal vehicle is not yet the self—not the existence of the universal which is for the universal” (Hegel 1830 § 409). But the positing of the subject as such is not the positing of some pure point of self-awareness. The *Existenz* of the I as the universal which is for the universal is not a pure and separate act. It happens in and through the externalization-internalization of language, in and through the awareness of separation and movements. That awareness is in process, not in some isolated instant. The for-itselfness of spirit is the structural possibility of ongoing discursive awareness, which can occur in many modes, especially in art, religion, and philosophy, but in no mode is it a time-ceasing instant of pure transparency. The Hegelian process that is for itself does not cease to be a process. Even in the *Logic*, the absolute idea is not a pure self-present instant of intuition; the self-presence of spirit in philosophy remains discursive.

16. A recent proponent of such pervasive transitions is Heidegger, who might prefer the depth metaphor, and who talks about transitions that he calls a new sending or word of being, revealed in philosophic or poetic saying. These are more than changes in sentence connection patterns. For instance, Heidegger claims that even though the translations of Greek philosophical terms into Latin tried to preserve the language system of the Greek terms, a deeper change in the meaning of being was happening in and around those translations. The deep transitions open new spaces for new kinds of moves. What alters may not primarily be patterns of sentence inference, but rather the background, the import of words, and the self-understanding of the speakers. The use of new words with new resonances and etymologies will change the understanding of what is being said and lead to different sentence connections. But the Heideggerian transition does not consist in those sentence connection changes. Nor is the saying (*Sage*) of language that Heidegger investigates merely the factual introduction of a new term. Though it may be embodied in a poetic or philosophic innovative word, the change is in the whole world, in what it means for an entity to be. Hegel would find Heidegger's kind of deep transition too close to an event springing from an irrational point source. But there are some similarities between Heidegger's transitions and Hegel's, in the way they affect whole worlds of thought and language. For Hegel these transitions have more necessity than Heidegger would allow, though Heidegger's history of being has its own odd unity and necessity.

17. Hegel would reject a description of any process that might “on its own” be some formless energy that needed an externally imposed form or guide to keep it in order. The *Logic* is supposed to show that real indetermination or formlessness is, finally, impossible.

18. Basic determinations of thought are not products, neither of subjectivity, nor of god, nor of social legislation. They do not exist outside of the absolute, the process that is reality. They are the shape of that process, not its products, and because that process is self-presentation or self-exposition, there is no separation between its shape and its content.

19. Which space? In the space opened by a particular historical set of categories, or in the space of the overall process of and to the self-presentation of spirit? For Hegel, we cannot make such a distinction.

20. The *Logic*’s circular inherence of a movement in itself thought its own self-determination and return to immediacy is, in Aristotle’s terms, an *energeia* not an *entelekheia*.

21. “In this way, the method is not an external form, but the soul and the Concept of the content. It is distinct from the content only inasmuch as the moments of the Concept, each in itself, in its determinacy, reach the point where they appear as the totality of the Concept. Since this determinacy, or the content, leads itself back, along with the form, to the Idea, the latter presents itself as a systemic totality, which is only One Idea. Its particular moments are in-themselves this same [Idea]; and equally, through the dialectic of the Concept, they produce the simple being-for-self of the Idea.—As a result the Science [of Logic] concludes by grasping the Concept of itself as the Concept of the pure Idea for which the Idea is” (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris [Indianapolis: Hacking, 1991], § 243)

22. See Hegel 1830, § 350–52.

23. There are at least four kinds of abstraction involved. There is the abstraction of a momentary inferential structure of the language system, the abstraction of a sequence of such momentary structures from the living process of language, the quite different abstraction of the form of the Hegelian process of self-manifestation from its contingent details, and yet another abstraction of this or that moment from the total Hegelian form of self-manifesting spirit.

24. Changes in grammar and pronunciation and the shifting meaning of words, as studied by linguists, do not seem to have any single unified explanation. Such changers proceed fairly randomly but irresistibly, though having a written language slows them down. See John McWhorter, *The Power of Babel* (New York: Holt, 2001), for a discussion of the processes of change in grammar, pronunciation, and the meaning of words, and the disjunction of these processes from cultural and philosophical currents. The kinds of slow changes he chronicles differ from the more sudden changes resulting from artistic, ethical, or scientific innovations, or cultural revolutions.

25. Just as an animal is a particular kind of living being, so a language system organized around the category of substance is a particular kind of language system. As I argue below about syllogistic forms, grammar and syntax are themselves embodiments, not direct presences of logical ideas in their purity.

26. In this context we might recall Hegel’s philosophy of history with its cunning of reason and its image of divine providence working through secondary causes without the need for any unnatural interventions.

27. See Stephan Körner, *Categorical Frameworks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970). In "Coming Down from the Trees: Metaphysics and the History of Classification," *Continental Philosophy Review* 35, 2 (June 2002): 161–83. I suggest that historically such concepts and their principles brought polarities and directionalities to the "space" of "being" for empirical concepts and statements. The "end of metaphysics" might be seen as the abandonment of polarizing transcategorical principles and the flattening out of the space of appearance. Hegel plays an ambivalent role in this "end"; his logic both flattens the space of being and introduces an order of derivation.

28. Earlier I argued that a Hegelian concept is embodied in a wide inferential network, not in a single tight empirical concept. Now I am claiming that a Hegelian concept comes closest to being nakedly present in a language system through certain non-empirical principles. These principles are not enunciated in the ordinary practice of the language system but can emerge in interpretations of language practices. Are such principles descriptions of very general properties of all beings, or are they reporting on linguistic rules, or avowing the community's linguistic practices? To settle this would require negotiating a thicket of issues relating semantic and alethic notions to the notion of being. Without argument I suggest that the principles turn out to be metalinguistic in the sense described in an earlier note.

29. A start on these criticisms can be found in my *Critique of Pure Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), and in several articles. See, for instance, "Hegel and Heidegger as Critics" (*The Monist*, 1981, pp. 481–99); "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel?" (*Philosophical Topics* 19:2 [Fall 1991]: 29–50); "The Final Name of God: Hegel on Determinate Religion," in *Hegel and the Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 162–75; "Circulation and Constitution at the End of History," in *Endings: Questions of Memory in Hegel and Heidegger*, ed. Rebecca Comay and John McCumber (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999), pp. 57–76; "Modernity's Self-Justification" (*The Owl of Minerva* 30, 2 (Spring 1999): 253–76; "The Spirit of Gravity: Architecture and Externality in Hegel," in *Hegel and Aesthetics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 83–96; "The Particular Logic of Modernity" (*Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 41–42 (2000): 31–42).

30. The way Hegel spatially disperses frozen remnants of earlier temporal stages of spirit deserves more study. There is a question about what kind of cultural or spiritual space is holding these different stages in their nondialectical relationships. Could such relationships exist within a single cultural assemblage?

31. There are many issues here to be explored. What would count as a test of Hegel's claims about large spiritual unities? Can those unities be saved by considering them as hermeneutic clues rather than explanatory essences? Can Hegel's notion of spirit's self-presentation handle the spatially mixed and temporally coincident diversities that have been always present and are especially strong in contemporary society and culture? Might there be something on the level of spirit that is akin to the role of space of the level of nature, a realm of externality that is not as totalizing as Hegel's temporal stages? How such a togetherness could become self-presented is an issue for discussions of Hegel, but also in many seemingly anti-Hegelian discussions today.

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SECTION 4

Postmodern Perspectives on Hegel's Linguistic Views

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CHAPTER 10

The Three Hegels: Kojève, Hyppolite, and Derrida on Hegel's Philosophy of Language

Catherine Kellogg

The tremendous power of the negative [is] the energy of thought, of the pure "I." Death, if that is what we want to call this non-actuality, is of all things, the most dreadful, and to hold fast what is dead requires the greatest strength. Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do. But the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. . . . Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face and tarrying with it.

—Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*

We cannot do without the concept of the sign, for we cannot give up this metaphysical complicity without also giving up the critique we are directing against this complicity, or without the risk of erasing the difference in the self-identity of a signified reducing its signifier outside itself. For there are two heterogeneous ways of erasing the difference between the signifier and signified: one, the classic way, consists in reducing or deriving the signifier, that is to say, ultimately in submitting the sign to thought; the other, the one we are using here against the first one, consists in putting into question the system in which the preceding reduction functioned: first and foremost, the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible.

—Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"

Vincent Descombes has characterized the history of twentieth-century French philosophy in terms of a series of successive attempts to escape the

omnivorous circle of Hegel's speculative dialectics.¹ For while Hegel's metaphysics has always prompted dismay—such thinkers as Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, and Marx are all inspired by the question of what the Hegelian system ignores or forecloses—nowhere has Hegel's claim that the logos of everything is the logical structure of identity-in-difference struck a more responsive chord than in twentieth-century France, where much contemporary philosophy and art can be understood as extended responses to and critiques of Hegelian philosophy. This political preoccupation with Hegel's metaphysics of closure gave rise to the renowned "Hegel Renaissance."

In this chapter, I explore this preoccupation through attending to the ways that three French philosophers struggled with Hegel's philosophy of language. More precisely, I argue that Jacques Derrida's grammatological project is powerfully illuminated when it is set in this context. Indeed, I argue that Jacques Derrida's reading of Hegel is very much in keeping with twentieth-century Hegel scholarship in France. At the same time, set in this context, it becomes clear that while Jacques Derrida's reading of Hegel makes use of an established set of concerns and questions, it also brings something wholly new into focus. What is new about Derrida's intervention is that it focuses not so much on escaping the closure of Hegelian metaphysics, but rather on making use of the elided moments of rupture and discontinuity that make the illusion of systematicity possible in the first place. Moreover, as I shall show, Derrida's strategy in this regard is not to expose errors by writing about the gaps or discontinuities in the Hegelian system, but rather to inscribe the "remains" that the Hegelian text reveals in the very gesture of covering them over.

In order to demonstrate both the continuity and the discontinuity of Derrida's work with the French philosophical tradition, I have structured this chapter around an analysis of two of the most important texts of the French "Hegel Renaissance": Alexandre Kojève's influential *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, and Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*.² More precisely, I read these texts in light of the very earliest of Derrida's readings of Hegel, "The Pit and the Pyramid: An Introduction to Hegel's Semiology."³ For only in the wake of Derrida's reading of Hegel does it become possible to notice that Kojève's and Hyppolite's texts are both preoccupied with a central concern of Hegelian philosophy: how the transition from sensible perception to conceptual thought is accomplished by way of the sign. As my discussion will show, the question of the sign's function is not marginal to the Hegelian project; on the contrary, it is only by virtue of the sign that Spirit is freed from dependency upon the empirical or sensible world. In short, on the view offered by Derrida's reading, it becomes possible to notice that the function of the sign has been a persistent theme of French Hegel studies.

The specific problem that Kojève and Hyppolite are struggling with, is that reflection upon the function of the sign and thus upon processes of signification, reach an apex and indeed a crisis in the Hegelian text. More pre-

cisely, both readings contend with the fact that while the Western philosophical tradition has always understood that the aim of language is immediacy, what Hegel noticed is that this immediacy, this singularity, is blocked off by the mediation of the here and the now. "Here" and "now" are always in an uncontrollable slippage; no two nows are ever simultaneous, no two here's ever occupy the same place. On the basis of this insight, Hegel argued that the sign cannot be a "secondary" instance whose task it is to represent a prior entity. On the contrary, Hegel argued that the sign is always a primary representation of Mind or Spirit itself. The sign does not stand in for the thing-in-itself to which it refers, but is rather, a representative or a delegate of Spirit.

While Hegel believes his semiological theory to be consistent with that of Western philosophy generally—and particularly with that of Aristotle—insofar as it "proceed[s] from psychology,"⁴ it does break decisively with that tradition insofar as it positions the sign and its referent in a relationship of dialectical contradiction.⁵ Unlike those theorists for whom the word refers directly to the thing-in-itself, mirroring or re-presenting it always somewhat imperfectly, on Hegel's telling, the sign effectively both destroys and preserves the referent, determinately negating it and thus leaving no remainder. In this sense, knowledge can be absolute for Hegel, because in the process by which Mind or Spirit produces itself as a system of signification, nothing meaningful is excluded or left out.

What Derrida's analysis goes to show is that the absolutism of that knowledge is necessarily compromised. For, it emerges that the sign leaves behind an unassimilable remainder—a remainder, that is, which is unrecoverable by and for knowledge, such that neither knowledge nor representation can be absolute. This remainder is thus covered over by a necessary gesture: the remains are disposed of or buried in what Hegel calls a "mine-like pit."⁶ For as the title of Derrida's text indicates, Hegel's discussion of the sign is organized around the twinned metaphors of a "pit" in which sensible intuitions are transformed into universal ideas or concepts, and a "pyramid" or sign which those concepts become. What Derrida's analysis goes to show is that "the path [from the pit to the pyramid] following the ontotheological route, still remains circular, and . . . the pyramid becomes once again the pit that it always will have been" (Derrida 1982, 71).

By this circularity Derrida is referring to the way that for Hegel, the image of the thing-in-itself that lies inert in the pit, or human unconscious, functions as though it were the thing or referent itself. The reason Hegel can position the sign and its referent in a relationship of dialectical contradiction, and thus claim that the sign sublates the thing toward which it refers (leaving no remainder), is precisely because the referent—what Hegel calls the object in its singularity—only has existence insofar as it is always already an image of and for Spirit. Said slightly differently, what Hegel means by the thing-in-itself is the image of the thing-in-itself that Mind intuitu, and is thus itself

already “on the side of the subject.” This is another way of saying that what Hegel refers to as the thing-in-itself—the general field of “nature” which Hegel demonstrates that thought, and thus language stabilizes—has always already been determined; it has been abstractly negated. In this sense, the negativity with which Hegel’s Spirit “tarries,” can be shown to be always already determined as a moment on the way to the Absolute.

Importantly, what Derrida’s analysis points out is that the possibility for that negativity is an interminable negativity that cannot be assimilated, represented, or even thought; an interminable negativity that is precisely the remainder Hegel so deftly disposes of. The result of Derrida’s strategy of inscribing this remainder in the Hegelian text is thus momentous: because this remainder is both an uncircumventable precondition for thought, and yet precisely what eludes conceptual thinking, the philosophical project cannot be led to the closure at which Hegel’s system aims, which is absolute knowledge or absolute representation.

Indeed, the circular relationship by which the pyramid becomes the pit that it will always have been, Derrida elsewhere calls “writing.”⁷ By “writing,” Derrida does not mean letters arranged on a page, nor indeed, any kind of material vehicle. Rather, by writing, or what might be more precise to say, by arche-writing, Derrida means the process by which “the signified always already functions as a signifier.”⁸ In other words, Derrida’s insight about signification in general, and about Hegel’s semiology in particular, is that because what we might think of as the referent is always discursively constituted, the signified/concept does not point unequivocally to the thing-in-itself but rather toward a phenomenon which is, on a certain view, already itself in language. This strange turn of thought, whereby the sign in Hegel’s thought is an entirely linguistic creation—the very phenomenon, that on Hegel’s view, liberates Spirit from the thing-in-itself—is precisely what leads Derrida to declare that Hegel was “the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing.”⁹ In short, on the reading I offer here, Derrida’s scandalous phrase, “il n’y a pas de hors-texte,” could have been said by Hegel as well.

Indeed, both Kojève’s and Hyppolite’s readings are grappling with the problem that just as the sign moves into view and becomes a privileged object of reflection, it also becomes a volatile object, unsure of its vocation. Thus, as Derrida suggests, paradoxically, the very reflection upon the sign Hegel’s text heralds, itself puts the identity of language into crisis.¹⁰ On this basis, I want to suggest that Hegel’s unwitting accomplishment—pointing toward the impossibility, or the failure of absolute representation—is what fuelled the Hegel Renaissance in France in the twentieth century.

For as I have suggested, Derrida does not come to the conclusion that Hegel’s theory of the sign is an important moment of rupture—that is, one of the moments where the illusion of systematicity is made possible only by extraordinary means—by himself. Indeed, as I will show, the careful work of

those philosophers who brought Hegel to the center of the French philosophical scene were indispensable for Derrida's reading.¹¹ However, while Kojève and Hyppolite can be shown to struggle with the "linguistic" nature of Hegel's referent, neither thinker is ultimately able to escape the problem presented by Hegel's philosophy of absolute representation. In fact, it is only retrospectively, in light of Derrida's reading, that the novelty of this dimension of these thinkers becomes apparent.

KOJÈVE'S HEGEL

By focusing on the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness in which the struggle for recognition happens between master and slave, Kojève provides us with a powerful image of man as a self-creating being arising out of the dialectic between his labor and the natural world it transforms. Specifically, Kojève investigates the way that this process of self-creation happens through what he calls "the miracle of discourse." In fact, Kojève detranscendentalized Hegel's speculative idealism through attending to Hegel's preoccupation with the function of language.

In the section on "Lord and Bondsman" around which Kojève's analysis so famously pivots, he renames what Hegel calls, in the epigraph to the present chapter, the "energy of thought," or negativity, as desire.¹² Indeed, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, which charts the move from simple self-certainty through to reason, is at the same time a narrative of the increasing sophistication of desire's aim. As the subject continuously expands its ability to discern identity in what appears at first look to be different, the subject learns to have new desires and to transform the world in such a way that those desires might be met. On this view, it is specifically the work of desire that transforms the natural world into something man completely controls: conceptual thought.

While there is nothing new in understanding that the condition of Spirit's freedom is its return from alienation in "nature," as Stuart Barnett points out, on Kojève's reading of Hegel, desire for reflection—human consciousness's need to become other to itself in order to know itself and thus free itself—seems to rely on and to anticipate a remarkably contemporary notion of "discourse." As Kojève says: "Hegel's Spirit is not . . . truly a 'divine' Spirit (because there are no mortal gods): It is human in the sense that it is a discourse that is immanent to the natural World and that has for its 'support' a natural being limited in its existence by time and space" (Carpino 1973, 123).

In fact, Spirit is nothing more than this discourse which relies on, or has as its "natural support," concrete human beings. For, as Kojève says, no matter what people may say, "discourse does not fall from heaven . . . it expresses a thought that belongs properly to an Ego, [and] this Ego has necessarily an empirical-existence in the natural spatio-temporal World" (130). In this sense,

Kojève's "anthropological" analysis of Hegel shifts the focus from Spirit understood as a deity, to Spirit understood as the development and self-articulation of human language.

Indeed, on Kojève's view, the task of philosophy is to make sense of the character of that discourse; to explain the fact that it has achieved an autonomous existence. As he says, "it is precisely the reality of discourse that is the miracle that philosophy must explain" (129). For Kojève argues that "Spirit is the Real revealed by Discourse" because its constituent moments, or signs, are utterly independent of the things-in-the-world to which they refer: their referents (132). The independence of signs takes place by virtue of two moves. First, the desiring subject, whose goal is to make identical to itself all that appears to be different, strips the spatio-temporal world of nature of its immediacy through the "power or force of abstraction" and, in so doing, rediscovers "external" existence as "internal" concept (126). It takes the differentiated, external world of "things" and abstractly negates them, rendering them as internal concepts. "Generally speaking, when we create the concept of a real entity, we detach it from its *hic et nunc*. The concept of a thing is that thing itself as detached from its given *hic et nunc*. Thus, the concept 'this dog' differs in no respect from the real concrete dog to which it is 'related' except that this dog is here and now, while its concept is everywhere and nowhere, always and never" (126). What the subject detaches from things-in-themselves in the creation of concepts, then, is their "here-and-nowness." And the abstracting force which strips "mere existence" of its immediacy—its here-and-nowness—so that its essence can be extracted, is more precisely identified as "the awesome power of the Understanding" (127).

The independence of the sign, as I suggested, happens by virtue of two moves. However, while Kojève is clear about the first—that things are stripped of their immediacy in order to be rendered as concepts—his analysis actually elides the second move; the "incarnation" of those concepts into words that have no relation whatsoever to the things to which they refer. This is the move, in other words, which establishes that the word and its referent are in a relationship of dialectical contradiction—that the word determinately negates its referent, destroying and conserving it. As Kojève says, "thanks to the absolute power of the Understanding, the essence becomes meaning and is incarnated in a word" and thus, "there is no longer any 'natural' relationship between it and its support" (129).

What Kojève is struggling with here, is the curious way that meanings cannot be thought separated from what Kojève calls "the specific support of discourse" (127). Meanings—concepts or signifieds—do not, as Kojève quite rightly points out, float freely. While Kojève is right to notice that concepts are always embodied in words, what he doesn't attend to is the fact that concepts are not just embodied in words, they are nothing but words at all.

The formulation Kojève proposes in fact covers over the answer to the very mystery Kojève sets out to solve: How is it that discourse comes to have

an autonomous existence? For rather than answer how the concept comes to be incarnated in a word, Kojève instead, switches focus back to the miracle of the autonomy of those words from the things to which they refer.

Kojève tells us that, on Hegel's account, what is miraculous is that "something that is really inseparable from [some] other thing achieves nevertheless a separate existence" (129), and Hegel finds this miraculous for a very practical reason. Insofar as discourse is autonomous from nature, conceptual thought has the ability to continue, even when the thing-in-itself from which the concept has been extracted, is no more.

As we will see when we read the pertinent section of Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*, the thisness or here-and-nowness of the sensible intuition that is made identical to what Kojève calls the desiring subject, is in fact a remainder that cannot be recovered for knowledge; it is the singularity of the singular thing-in-itself that most eludes conceptual thought. And for Derrida, then, the implications for Hegel's thought are much more radical than they are for Kojève: the origin of conceptual thought, on Derrida's reading of Hegel, is not a real presence, an actual thing-in-itself, but rather a trace, which is itself unrecoverable by knowledge or any kind of representation. Language, then, is the practice of forgetting that the origin of the sign was never the thing-in-itself.

HYPPOLITE'S HEGEL

Kojève's lectures on *The Phenomenology*—and their subsequent publication in 1947—were central to the rehabilitation of Hegelian thought in French philosophy. However, the legacy of Jean Hyppolite's reading for contemporary French philosophy should not be forgotten. Indeed, Leonard Lawlor claims that Hyppolite's reading of Hegel did nothing less than "effectively end" the anthropological reading of Hegel which Kojève so popularized.¹³ Whereas Kojève's discussion largely ignores what Hyppolite called "the adventure of Being" outlined in the *Science of Logic* in order to concentrate on Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Hyppolite investigates the link between the phenomenology and the logic: human experience and the Absolute, which are the proper domains of the sensible and the intelligible.

Indeed, Hyppolite names this link as "Hegel's most obscure dialectical synthesis" and it constitutes the focus of his 1952 *Logic and Existence* (Hyppolite 1997, 189). In a 1954 review of this book, Gilles Deleuze argues that while the more well-known *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* "preserved all of Hegel and was its commentary," the "intention of this new book, is very different." As Deleuze says, "Hyppolite questions the Logic, the Phenomenology and the Encyclopedia on the basis of a precise idea and on a precise point. Philosophy must be ontology, it cannot be anything else."¹⁴ Philosophy, in other words, is always an investigation into the question of

Being. This shift in emphasis—from experience to Being—constituted no small change in Hegel studies in France; in fact, on Leonard Lawlor's view, the appearance of this text "fuelled the fire of French anti-humanism, which Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' had already ignited" (ix).

The decisive break that Hyppolite makes with Kojève's anthropological reading of Hegel is that he takes seriously the itinerary of the Concept laid out in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. At the same time, Hyppolite insists that the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic* differ only in regard to the element in which their respective dialectics take place: the *Phenomenology* in the element of experience; the *Logic* in the element of the concept. And as we will see, for Hyppolite, the question of the transition from the phenomenology to logic is oriented by the same concern that fascinates Kojève: the function of the sign.

If Kojève managed to detranscendentalize Hegel's speculative logic through figuring negativity as desire, he did so by bracketing the *Logic* and thus the question of the concept of Being. In reintroducing the *Logic*, however, Hyppolite should not be understood to have retranscendentalized Hegel. On the contrary, while he maintains the importance of the Absolute, he also maintains that Being is not Essence but Sense. The argument Hyppolite develops pivots on the equivocal nature of the word "sense"; a word which, like *aufheben*, as Hyppolite points out, delights Hegel with its plurivocity. "Sense is this wonderful word which is used in two opposite meanings. On the one hand it means the organ of immediate apprehension, but on the other hand we mean by it the sense, the significance, the thought, the universal sense or meaning of the thing."¹⁵ Sense, then, is itself a link between experience and the concept; between the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*. The concept of Being, Hyppolite maintains, is not essence beyond appearance, nor a second, true, intelligible world but rather the sense of this world. Indeed, on Hyppolite's view, it is the particular virtue of Hegel's thought to have refused the thought of either the ineffable sensible world (qua Plato) or the ineffable intelligible world (qua Kant, Jacobi, Fichte) (8–11). As Hyppolite puts it, "Expression of sense is the work of thought, and this work does not start from an ineffable which would be given first, nor does it lead beyond to an ineffable transcendence; sensible singularity and the mystery of Faith are, for Hegel, illusions; . . . [they are] the presentation of the Absolute as pure nothingness or dissolution" (11).

Hegel's speculative logic is so revolutionary, Hyppolite maintains, precisely because in extending Kant's speculative logic, Hegel's thought "no longer recognizes the limit of the thing-in-itself" which "would always haunt our reflection and would limit knowledge in favour of faith and non-knowledge" (58, 3). Indeed, Absolute knowledge "essentially means the elimination of this non-knowledge" and, consequently, the elimination of "a transcendence essentially irreducible to our knowledge" (3). "The Absolute determines itself and negates itself as Logos and Nature. This opposition is absolute. Each term is simultaneously positive and negative. Each is the Whole that opposes itself

to itself. Each is in itself the opposite of itself and represents therefore the other in itself" (100).

Hyppolite maintains that the major proposition of Hegel's *Logic*, is thus that there is no beyond of thought. For "in thinking itself, thought always thinks being, and by thinking being, it thinks itself" (27). In order to think itself, to reflect on itself, Being makes itself different from itself—for example, as the difference between essence and appearance. In order to know itself Absolutely, Being alienates itself in exteriority. Indeed, the Absolute exists "only as this doubling" (101). In doubling itself, twisting itself back on itself, in contradicting and thus saying itself, Being is able to know itself Absolutely. In a certain way, then, Absolute knowledge is what is there. This is what Hyppolite means when he quotes Hegel saying, "It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen."¹⁶ Hyppolite reiterates this point when he says, "the secret is that there is no secret" (90).

Hyppolite's answer to the question How does the passage from the Phenomenology to Absolute Knowledge work? then, is the same as his answer to the question How is it that Spirit becomes liberated from nature? That is: in "the dialectical genesis of language." For "according to the *Philosophy of Spirit*, the sensible becomes the *Logos*: meaningful language" (27, 23). Language is the medium between Nature and Logos. It is Being saying itself. Thus, again, as we saw with Kojève's treatment of Hegel, Hyppolite can be seen to have grasped the implications of Hegel's radical semiological claim—that there is nothing beyond language—at the same time that he covers over its import. For like Kojève, Hyppolite continues to affirm that language does refer to things in themselves.

Hyppolite ends his text with a meditation on the two directions in which Hegel's philosophy extends: "one direction leads to the deification of Humanity; the other, the one that we have followed in this work, leads to the Absolute's self-knowledge across man" (177). He is clearly making reference to Kojève's anthropological reading in the first instance, and again separating his reading from that offered by Kojève. In his review, Gilles Deleuze muses: "The richness of Hyppolite's book could . . . let us wonder this: can we not construct an ontology of difference which would not have to go up to contradiction, because contradiction would be less than difference and not more? . . . [I]s it the same thing to say that Being expresses itself and that it contradicts itself?¹⁷ What an ontology of difference that "would not have to go up to contradiction"—dialectical opposition—would look like, will have to wait for one of Hyppolite's most famous students: Jacques Derrida.

DERRIDA'S HEGEL

Derrida's first work on Hegel was in fact prepared for Jean Hyppolite and he presented it in Hyppolite's 1968 seminar on Hegel's *Logic* at the College de

France. This text was subsequently published in *Hegel et la pensée moderne*.¹⁸ In this seminar, Derrida took the opportunity to continue investigating the question asked by his teacher concerning the Hegelian question par excellence: the problem of the passage from the *Phenomenology* to the *Logic*. Of course, Derrida reframed this question in the terms of his own grammatological project, a project that investigated the metaphysical distinction between the sensible and the intelligible. And like Hyppolite and Kojève before him, Derrida's focus is the way that the sign operates as a transition or "bridge" between the sensible and intelligible realms (Derrida 1982, 71).

Derrida's analysis proceeds from a careful investigation of several long paragraphs in Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*—the third of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences—which is the very text Hyppolite investigated in the chapter entitled "Sense and Sensible" in *Logic and Existence*.¹⁹ *The Philosophy of Mind* is itself articulated in three moments: Subjective Spirit, Objective Spirit, and Absolute Spirit. Derrida is at pains to demonstrate that Hegel's theory of the sign occurs within the first articulation of Spirit: within the articulation of Subjective Spirit which is spirit's "relation to itself . . . in the form of only internal freedom" (74). As Hegel says, "the finite is not, i.e. is not the truth but merely a transition."²⁰ Subjective Spirit, in other words, is Spirit on its way to itself as it will be "in itself and for itself" as Absolute Spirit. Thus, Subjective Spirit is Spirit in transition. Significantly, for Hegel, the sign, is also a transition or bridge; in this sense, the sign's modality of being is in the same way as that of Subjective Spirit. Both the sign and subjective spirit have their being in the same way, as a transition, and thus they both transgress themselves from within.

If it is significant that Hegel's theory of the sign occurs during his discussion of Subjective Spirit, however, it is even more interesting, Derrida tells us, that the discussion occurs during the third moment of Subjective Spirit: Psychology. Following on the heels of *Phenomenology* (which is the "coming to be of science as such"), it must be recalled, Psychology is the science of Spirit determining itself in itself, as a subject for itself (Hegel 1970, 80). This is the moment at which "all [Spirit] has to do is to realize the notion of its freedom" (179). The sign grants Spirit its freedom insofar as, through it, thought becomes entirely independent of the objective natural properties of the entity toward which it points. The sign demonstrates intellect's ability to use the perceived world for its own purposes while effacing its traces. It does this by virtue of its infinite "repeatability"; neither the thing-in-itself to which it refers, nor the subject who repeats it, need to be present for it to function. In this way, the sign touches on the relationship between the subject and object. Placing the study of the sign within the study of the subject as Mind then, rehearses a classical motif that fixes the relationship between the intelligible and sensible, the transcendental and the empirical, the ideal and the material, and the primary and the secondary. In short, placing the discussion

of the sign in a section headed "Psychology" mobilizes an entire metaphysical tradition that privileges speech over writing (Derrida 1982, 75). In order to fully flesh out Derrida's reading of Hegel's semiology then, in the next section of this chapter, I would like to proceed slowly through the relevant section of the *Philosophy of Mind* upon which Derrida relies.

In the first moment of perception, Hegel tells us that intelligence relates directly to an immediate "single" object in a process of sensible intuition; intelligence apprehends or intuits an object in its singularity. This relation to immediacy is of course negativity. Stated differently, in being apprehended by an intelligent mind, the immediate, sensible intuition is necessarily submitted to the power of negation. Through this negative process of apprehension, the singular sensible immediacy of the thing-in-itself is stripped of its own time and place and placed as a mental image of that object in the reservoir of intelligence itself. Significantly, however, Hegel tells us that the image the subject has appropriated is "no longer existent" because the image is not available to consciousness or to will, but is instead "stored up out of consciousness" in a "night-like mine or pit" (Hegel 1971, 204).

Equally importantly, as a result of this move, the mind becomes aware of itself as something separate from the object; intelligence develops an intuition of itself as Mind. By first paying attention to the object, and second, noticing its own attention to the object, intelligence is transformed into something more than perception. It becomes "intelligent intuition," capable of positing the object as something "self-external" (192). Because intelligence becomes aware of itself, it withdraws away from its relationship to the object's "singularity" and learns to relate the object to a universal-mental Representation (*Vorstellung*). This is the process by which the abstractly negated thing-in-itself is speculatively or determinately negated.

Determinate negation happens characteristically, in three articulations: Recollection (*Erinnerung*), Imagination (*Die Einbildungskraft*) and Memory (*Gedächtnis*). These are the moments by which the immediacy of the thing-in-itself is transcended. In this second form of negation, abstract negativity is discovered to be itself subject to a further negation, a negation which does not return us to the starting point, but rather reveals the underlying unity of thought itself. "Abstract" negativity is itself negated and consequently preserved and lifted up into thought. In short, an initial wholly abstract negativity is in turn negated and thus made identical to thought.

While the object has been stripped of its immediacy by being brought into the subject as an image, this image has as yet no subjectivity because it has been deposited in the mind's unconscious. Thus, while Hegel tells us that "[t]he image is mine," at the same time, the image, "has no further homogeneity with me, for it is still not thought, still not raised into the form of Reason. . . . I do not yet have full command over the images slumbering in the mine or pit of my inwardness, am not as yet able to recall them at will. . . .

The . . . image is [mine] only in a formal manner" (Hegel 1970, 205). In order to have full command of this image, Hegel tells us that it must be referred back to its actual intuition. In order that the image, carelessly and randomly "collected" and now lying inert in the unconscious, can become something under conscious and willed control, it must be re-collected, matched up to a corresponding intuition. But Hegel also tells us, this intuition must subsume "the immediate single intuition under what is in point of form universal, under the representation with the same content" (Hegel 1970, 205). The image must be referred back to its "external existence," its origin as a sensible intuition. In order that I have full command over any image of which I might only once and thus fleetingly have made an impression, I must re-collect it or re-cognize it. It is only in this way that the image becomes not just property but possession.

Recollection (*Erinnerung*) thus refers to the process by which the image is made the "property" of Mind. This process of "inwardization" transforms the sensible intuition from an image of the object, fixed in the mind's "eye," to a property of mind itself. In this way, "the image, which in the mine of intelligence was only its property, now that it has been endued with externality, comes actually into possession." In being re-cognized, re-collected, and inwardized, the image is made "separable from the blank night in which it was originally submerged" (204).

The image is thus transferred from the "blank night" of the unconscious, referred to its "recollected existence" to become actual and real as a representation. So to recapitulate: a sensible intuition, appropriated by perceptive intelligence, was transformed into an inert image (which slumbered in the dark mine of the unconscious). This image was subsequently recalled by the conscious ego by being matched up to another instantiation of that of which it is an image, and in this way abstracted and synthesized into a concept/idea.

Once Mind has achieved representation, we find ourselves already at the form of intelligence known as Imagination (*Die Einbildungskraft*). For as Hegel tells us, the intelligence "active" in the "inward world of the ego"—the intelligence which now has power over the representation—is what he calls "reproductive imagination" [*reproduktive Einbildungskraft*] (206). Not surprisingly, the reproductive imagination reproduces the idea/representation. However, in being reproduced, this "given" and "immediate" representation is presented to the conscious and universalizing ego, which "gives images . . . generality." As Hegel says, "Abstraction, which occurs in the ideational activity by which general ideas are produced (and ideas qua ideas virtually have the form of generality) is frequently explained as the incidence of many similar images one upon another and is supposed to be thus made intelligible. If this superimposing is to be no mere accident and without principle, a force of attraction in like images must be assumed, or something of the sort, which at the same time would have the negative power of rubbing off the dissimilar

elements against each other. The force is really intelligence itself—the self-identical ego which by its internalizing recollection gives the images ipso facto generality, and subsumes the single intuition under the already internalized image” (207). In being presented to consciousness, the synthesized idea/representation both produces, and is mediated by the productive—that is, “symbolic, allegoric, or poetical”—imagination (*phantasie*). While the reproductive imagination was only capable of reproducing and thus presenting to consciousness an already existent image, the productive imagination is capable of producing independent representations. As Hegel says, “In creative imagination, intelligence has been so . . . perfected [as] to need no aids for intuition. Its self-sprung ideas have pictorial existence” (210). Productive imagination, in other words, produces its own representations, without the aid of external prodding. Indeed, productive or creative imagination turns out to be the “center” at which the opposites of the “internal and external” flow into each other, cutting across each other, as Hegel says, “completely into one” (210).

In this sense, productive imagination is the moment when the sensuously concrete image is speculatively negated, when its immediacy is dialectically contradicted. For the synthesis between the “internal idea” and the “vehicle of materialization”—the internal and the external manifestations of the thing-itself—has thus had another important effect: intelligence has become a “concrete subjectivity” (211). “Productive imagination [*phantasie*] is the centre in which the universal and being, one’s own and what is picked up, internal and external, are completely welded into one. The preceding ‘syntheses of intuition, recollection,’ etc., are unifications of the same factors, but they are syntheses; it is not until creative imagination that intelligence ceases to be the vague mine and the universal, and becomes an individuality, a concrete subjectivity, in which the self-reference is defined both to being and to universality” (211). This synthesis then, is between the universal (one’s own) and being (what’s picked up). There is, in other words, no longer a separation between the image and the subject who produces it. Thus, it should not seem surprising, Hegel tells us, that “intelligence makes itself be as a thing” (211). Intelligence, as reproductive imagination “aims at making itself be and be a fact” for “its ideal import is itself” (211). In order to know what is this thing which intelligence makes itself be, we must move through one more moment in the movements of Mind.

Hegel announces that there is another new unity at work: the unity of an “independent representation” with an “intuition.” For we remember that Mind is now able to produce representations without the aid of the external world, which is to say, without having to encounter an example of what the representation represents. In producing these representations, then, Mind is in fact exteriorizing itself. In the fusion of two elements, the intuition (and I will return shortly to the question of what this is an intuition of) is “an image which receives as its soul and meaning an independent mental representation.

This intuition," Hegel tells us, "is the Sign" (213). "The sign is some immediate intuition, representing a totally different import from what naturally belongs to it; it is the pyramid into which a foreign soul has been conveyed, and where it is conserved" (213). Thus, from the "mine-like pit," in which original sensible intuitions are first stored, emerges a pyramid: a sign.

Derrida points to a fundamental ambivalence in Hegel's thought here. On the one hand, as he points out, Hegel is arguing that the productive imagination simply exteriorizes what has been already interiorized, appropriated, and synthesized: a representation of an intuition, or a concept. On the other hand, however, insofar as the intuition that is united to a representation, is the intuition of Mind itself, Derrida says that this new synthesis or unity is a "representation of representation (in the general sense of conceptual ideality)" (Derrida 1982, 81). Indeed, Hegel says that in the "fusion of the independent representation with an intuition" the "intuition does not count positively, or as representing itself, but as a representative of something else" (Hegel 1970, 212). The sign is a representative, a delegate or a stand-in for Mind or Spirit itself.

Thus, Derrida says, Hegel is proposing something that "might appear scandalous or unintelligible" (Derrida 1982, 78). For Hegel is proposing that the productive imagination "does nothing less than produce intuitions." This implies, as Derrida says, "the spontaneous production of that which is to be seen [the sign] by that which is thus able to see and to receive [Mind]" (Hegel 1970, 78). It is in this way, Derrida tells us that "the path [from the pit to the pyramid] following the ontotheological route, still remains circular, and . . . the pyramid becomes once again the pit that it always will have been." The question, then, is how this circular movement can sustain itself. Indeed, Derrida refers to this circularity as an "enigma" (Derrida 1982, 77).

In order to unravel this enigma, we must return to the last moment in the tripartite movement of Representation: Memory (*Gedächtnis*). Hegel tells us that is important to note that this form of memory is quite different from the Recollection (*Erinnerung*) discussed earlier. *Gedächtnis* is roughly equivalent to the French *mémoire*, or to the English notion of memorization. Thus, for Hegel, the progression from perception to conceptual thought, Mind's progression from attention to Reason, depends crucially on the ability to memorize. Indeed, as Hegel says, "To comprehend the position and meaning of memory [*Gedächtnis*] and to understand its organic interconnection with thought is one of the hardest points, and hitherto one quite unregarded in the theory of mind" (Hegel 1970, 222). What distinguishes memory [*Gedächtnis*] from recollection [*Erinnerung*] is that memory requires no images. Memory, as Hegel means it, is the specialized ability to recall words that are emptied of meaning. "The faculty of [learning] by rote a series of words, with no principle governing their succession, or which are separately meaningless, for example a series of proper names, is so supremely marvellous, because it is the very essence of mind to have its wits about it" (222). Indeed, it is in this regard—

that the mind is encouraged to develop or unfold in such practices as learning to recite words as a series of proper names—that Hegel declares alphabetical characters to be superior to hieroglyphs or other symbolized forms of inscription. Like learning words as though they were names, emptied of sensory meaning, alphabetical characters “lead the mind from the sensibly concrete image to the more formal vocal word and its abstract elements” (218). “Given the name lion, we need neither the actual vision of the animal, nor its image even: the name alone, if we understand it, is the unimaged (sic) simple representation. We think in names” (220). These signs are in turn learned as though they were names because the sign-as-name has been utterly divested of its relationship to the thing in its own time and space. Memory (*Gedächtnis*) is the process by which we learn names (or words considered as names), by rote. The Idea makes its appearance on the mental stage of human consciousness at the precise moment when our consciousness of the world—which faculties such as perception and imagination have interiorized by way of recollection (*Erinnerung*)—is no longer experienced, but remains accessible only to memorization (*Gedächtnis*), or mechanical memory.

On Hegel’s view, then, memorization (which we generally think of as a trick or tool of the intellect) turns out to be the key to Spirit’s freedom. For what each of the above-described movements are designed to do, is to move Mind away from the singularity of the thing-in-itself; to establish Mind’s freedom from it. The sign establishes Mind’s freedom because unlike the singular intuition, or the recollected or imagined image to which it refers, the sign is in no way dependent upon the thing-in-itself. For the sign, unlike the thing, does not stand in for or represent the thing, but as we saw, the sign is a representative of Spirit.

In this sense, Spirit’s freedom, and thus conceptual thought, is completely dependent on a mental faculty—Memory—that is thoroughly mechanical. For what memory does, and what makes it crucial to transforming the sensible intuition into thought, is that it covers over the realization that the sign refers to the singularity of each thing-in-itself to which signification refers. Paradoxically, mechanical memory covers over this realization by way of a forgetting of a forgetting (I will return to this double forgetting in a moment).

In terms of my argument here, what is first important to notice is that at every new moment in the movements of Mind, we find Spirit or Mind “always-already” at its next moment. Thus, sensible intuition emerges as always-already attention, attention emerges as always-already recollection, which in turn emerges as always-already imagination (and so on). This logical structure of the always-already is, in fact, what Derrida calls the trace; it is, as he says elsewhere, “the being-imprinted of the imprint” (Derrida 1976, 63).

Importantly, the only way that the enterprise of thought can get under way—the move from simple sensible intuition through to conceptual thought—is if this logical structure of the always-already is presumed. In a

sense then, the enterprise of thought must presuppose its own condition of possibility in the expectation that the process that made thought possible will eventually catch up with it. In order for knowledge to become for-itself or Absolute, it must enclose or include each movement of thought as knowledge; that is what it means to be Absolute. However, what I will now demonstrate is that this “trace” can never appear for knowledge “as such.” It is precisely what is unrecoverable.

For the logical structure of the always-already is, in fact, the sublation—the dialectical overcoming—of space and time. In other words, the condition of possibility for conceptual thought, as Hegel was well aware, is the containment of the volatility of spatial and temporal difference. The always-already then, is the way that Hegel manages to restrict that uncontainability into a feature of thought itself. It is for this reason that the process of “being-imprinted”—the logical structure of the always-already to which I referred above—is not a thing, but rather an event; the trace is only ever a gesture rather than an “as such.” The identity of speculative or absolute knowledge is thus made possible by a process of temporization and differentiation that cannot be recuperated to that knowledge.

For, as this reading demonstrates, the Hegelian system necessarily relies upon a nontotalizable and interminable difference—the “remains” that are buried in the pit of the unconscious—that can be neither elevated nor interiorized by that system. The absolute identity of speculative knowledge is shown to be impossible because while the system relies on a process of differentiation or negation, it also leaves behind a remainder whose unsublatability undoes that very absolutism.

This is the answer to the enigma of the circular route from the pit to the pyramid. For the pit, or unconscious, houses images—mental representations of concrete things-in-themselves—that, in being stripped of their sensory here-and-nowness, emerge as signs. But the images that rest in the pit, or unconscious, function as though they were the things or referents themselves. In other words, the reason Hegel can determine the sign and its referent in a relationship of dialectical contradiction, and thus claim that the sign sublates the thing to which it refers, leaving no remainder, is precisely because the referent—what Hegel calls the object in its singularity—only has existence insofar as it is always already an image of and for Spirit. The thing-in-itself—the general field of “nature,” which Hegel demonstrates that thought and thus language stabilizes—has thus always already been determined as abstract negation. In this sense, the thing-in-itself or referent has also already been determined as a moment on the way to the Absolute.

Paradoxically then, Absolute knowledge is only possible if the knowledge that renders it impossible—that the trace is unrecoverable by it—is forgotten. Memory actually works to cover over—to forget, if you will—that the sign is not the tomb for an “intact kernel,” but is, rather, as Derrida names it, the

“monument of life-in-death, the monument of death-in-life” (Derrida 1982, 83). The task of mechanical memory is to draw the mind away from the fact that the sign does not refer to the thing-in-itself, to forget that there is, in a certain sense, nothing to forget. Of course, what Derrida’s analysis is premised on is that the possibility for that referent is the “without-reserve of absolute expenditure”; an interminable negativity that cannot be assimilated, represented, or even thought. Against this determination of difference as always-already contradiction, Derrida suggests that “what Hegel, the relevant interpreter of the entire history of philosophy could never think is a machine that would work without being governed by an order of reappropriation” (42). He goes on to say that Hegel would be unable to think this machine, because working without meaning, it would “inscribe itself within it an effect of pure loss” (42). In short, Derrida’s pointed accusation to Hegel is that the movement of the *Aufhebung*, what he calls the “economic law of absolute reappropriation of the absolute loss,” appropriates all of the excessive outside of thought and puts it to work in the service of meaning.²¹

Derrida’s analysis thus demonstrates that in order for its result to be Absolute knowledge, the “difference” or negativity that is the resource for thought must have already been determined; it is always already on the route to the Absolute. What Derrida suggests is that the condition of possibility for this restricted notion of difference is the possibility of what Hegel rightly calls “difference in general.” Contra Hegel, Derrida points out that this general difference is not already contradiction, but is rather a kind of alterity that cannot be assimilated or thought and thus cannot be represented. Because this generalized difference “has no reserved underside,” it can no longer be put to work; it “can no longer labour and let itself be interrogated.”²² What Derrida’s analysis goes to show is that the absolutism of that knowledge is necessarily compromised. For, it emerges, as Derrida’s analysis reveals, that the sign leaves behind an inassimilable remainder—a remainder, that is, that is unrecoverable by and for knowledge, such that neither knowledge nor representation can be absolute.

NOTES

1. Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 12.

2. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James Nichols Jr. (New York: Basic, 1969).

3. Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

4. Jacques Derrida, “The Pit and the Pyramid: An Introduction to Hegel’s Semiology,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 75.

5. This notion of contradiction, or *widerspruch* (dialectical contradiction), rather than *unterschied* (diversity), is crucial. *Widerspruch*, understood as dialectical opposition, or contradiction, is importantly distinguished from mere difference by Hegel in the *Science of Logic*, particularly in "The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection." For an excellent discussion of the relationship between Hegel's notions of *widerspruch* and *unterschied* and how they relate to Derridean *différance*, see John Protevi, "Derrida and Hegel: Différance and Unterschied," in *International Studies in Philosophy* 25, 3 (1993): 59–71.

6. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the "Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences,"* trans. William Wallace together with *Zusätze* in Boumann's text (1845). Trans. A. V. Miller, with a foreword by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p. 204.

7. The temporality of "what will have been" or of the future anterior is important to both Hegel and Derrida. Indeed, Derrida quite rightly argues that Hegelian Spirit is that which "in advance interiorizes all content" such that it is always what it will have been. *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 22a.

8. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated with an introduction by Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 7.

9. (Derrida 1976, 26) Of this statement, Derrida says: "[O]ne would be mistaken [upon reading it] in coming to the conclusion of a death of the book and the birth of writing. . . . [W]riting does not begin. It is even on the basis of writing, if one can put it this way, that one can put into question the search for an arché, an absolute beginning, an origin. Writing can no more begin, therefore, than the book can end." *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), pp. 13–14.

10. Derrida says: "However the topic is considered, the problem of language has never been one problem among others. But never as much as at the present has it invaded, as such, the global horizon of the most diverse researches and the most heterogeneous discourses. . . . [T]his crisis is also a symptom. It indicates, as if in spite of itself, that a historico-metaphysical epoch must finally determine as language the totality of its problematic horizon" (Derrida 1976, 6).

11. However, it is important to note that Derrida has been roundly critical of the "anthropological" dimension of Kojève's reading of Hegel. He says that "the anthropologic reading of Hegel . . . was a mistake in one entire respect, perhaps the most serious mistake. And it is this reading which furnished the best conceptual resources to postwar French thought. First of all, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* which had only been read for a short time in France, does not have to do with something one might call man. As the science of the experience of consciousness, the science of the structures of the phenomenality of the spirit itself relating to itself, it is rigorously distinguished from anthropology." Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 117.

12. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, analysis and forward by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 19. In a thoroughly Hegelian fashion, Kojève's lectures were collected and subsequently published by his students in 1947 as *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947). An abridged version of this text was translated into English in 1969 and published as: Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, James H. Nichols tr., Allan Bloom, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell Uni-

versity Press, 1980). While those of us in the English-speaking world are most familiar with this compilation, in fact, Bloom severely truncated the original text. He entirely omitted the complete text of the last two lectures of the 1933–34 academic year. These lectures were subsequently translated into English by Joseph Carpino and published under the title “The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel,” in *Interpretation* 3 (1973): 114–56, p. 123. This is the section of Kojève’s text Bataille responds to in his “Hegel, la mort, et le sacrifice,” *Deucalion* 5 (Neuchâtel, 1955) and to which Derrida responds in “From a Restricted to a General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve,” in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). Carpino’s translation is also the section of Kojève’s text most important for my analysis.

13. Leonard Lawlor, “Translator’s Preface” to Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. viii.

14. Gilles Deleuze, “Review of Jean Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence*,” Originally published in *Revue Philosophique de la France l’étranger* (1954): 144, 457–60. Reprinted in *Logic and Existence*, p. 191. Emphasis in the original.

15. *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128–29. Cited in *Logic and Existence*, *ibid.*, p. 24.

16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 103. Cited in *Logic and Existence*, p. 60.

17. Gilles Deleuze, “Review of Jean Hyppolite, *Logique et Existence*,” Originally published in *Revue philosophique de la France l’étranger* (1954): 144, 457–60. Reprinted in *Logic and Existence*, p. 195.

18. *Hegel et le pensée moderne* (Paris, 1971). This text was subsequently revised and republished, and appears under the title “The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel’s Semiology,” in *Margins of Philosophy*.

19. *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the “Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences,”* trans. A. V. Miller, with a foreword by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p. 23, cited in Derrida, 1982, p. 74.

20. This immediate singularity, for Hyppolite, is an ineffable intuition, what he calls “what we will never see twice,” and it is therefore “the worst of all banalities” (Hyppolite 1997, 15).

21. Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 133a.

22. Jacques Derrida, “From a Restricted to a General Economy,” in *Writing and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

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CHAPTER 11

Hegel, Kristeva, and the Language of Revolution

Claire May

Among the most common criticisms of Hegel by twentieth-century philosophers, especially the continentals, is that Hegel's system is totalizing, that it reduces difference to the same. Heidegger, Derrida, and Levinas, for example, have all expressed some version of this judgment. Even Jean Hyppolite, who has offered one of the most insightful readings of Hegel, especially of Hegel's theory of language, speaks of a dialectic of language that generates a "totality of sense."¹ Indeed, there is much in Hegel's philosophy that lends itself to the conclusion that his system is totalizing, including the thesis that the dialectic is progressing toward Absolute Knowledge, when, presumably, all difference will be sublated and unified as the all-encompassing self-consciousness of Geist. This interpretation of Hegel's system is not universal, however. Among Anglo-American philosophers, William Maker and John McCumber have offered nontotalizing interpretations of Hegel.² And among philosophers of continental background, Hannah Arendt argues that the Hegelian dialectic forms an "infinite spiral," rather than a closed system.³

In spite of the objections of many twentieth-century philosophers to Hegel's alleged totalization, he has been crucial to the thinking of many of his most outspoken critics. Among these is Julia Kristeva, who has used the Hegelian dialectic, including Hegel's concept of negativity, in the formation of her own nontotalizing language theory. Negativity, Kristeva argues, creates a perpetual movement of language and meaning that reflects the formation and continual transformation of the speaking subject. This chapter will examine Kristeva's interpretation of Hegel and argue that his theory of language is more radical (and closer to hers) than she seems to realize. In fact, her misreadings of Hegel, especially his concept of negativity, bring into focus for us the radical implications of what Hegel wrote about language. The chapter will argue that an analysis of Hegel's language theory, especially the operation of

negativity within language, puts into question the conclusion that Hegel's system is totalizing. It will argue that because negativity inheres in language, according to Hegel, the dialectic will never reach stasis, will rather be the infinite process envisioned by Arendt—for as long as language is spoken.⁴

KRISTEVA'S POETIC LANGUAGE

Kristeva's language theory is found primarily in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, originally a doctoral thesis prepared under the direction of Jacques Lacan.⁵ Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Kristeva discusses the ego's individuation and socialization through and concurrent with the acquisition of language. Neither the ego so formed nor the language so acquired is unitary or static, however. Rather, both are subject to a continuous dialectic: the ego caught between the pulls of conscious and unconscious, and that ego's language in the play between meaning and madness. The ego caught up in this dialectic, according to Kristeva, is "no longer considered a phenomenological transcendental ego nor the Cartesian ego" but rather a subject *en process*: in process/on trial—through language (Kristeva 1984, 37).

The language that both speaks that subject and is spoken by her Kristeva terms "poetic language." Poetic language assumes an interplay of two modalities of the signifying process, the semiotic with the symbolic, in a dialectic that constitutes both the text and the speaking/writing subject. The subject *en process* and poetic language are thus mutually constitutive in the dialectic of symbolic and semiotic signification. Virtually all discourse is expressed as poetic language, according to Kristeva: "Because the subject is always both semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (24).

Symbolic signification, according to Kristeva, reflects social constraints. It assumes a patriarchal hierarchy, fixed grammatical categories, syntactical rules, and univalent signification. The semiotic mode of signification, on the other hand, results from biological drives in an "operation that logically and chronologically precedes the establishment of the symbolic and its subject" (41). Kristeva describes the semiotic as "enigmatic and feminine, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgment, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax" (29). The semiotic pulsates through language as a continuous disturbance of the stasis sought by symbolic signification. It registers in language as polyvalent signs and symbols, connotation rather than denotation, and disrupted conventions of grammar and syntax. Its presence may also be recognized in a text by the tone and mood conveyed through images, and by the musicality of signifiers.

Negativity, which Kristeva considers to be the fourth term of Hegel's dialectic, impels the movement by which the semiotic disrupts the stability sought by the social order and the monovalency sought by symbolic language.⁶

Thus, negativity for Kristeva results in poetic language and in the continuing transformation of both the speaking subject and the social system of which that subject is a part. It is "both the cause and the organizing principle of the process, . . . the liquefying and dissolving agent that does not destroy but rather reactivates new organizations and, in that sense, affirms" (109). Kristeva's explanation of negativity has its basis in psychoanalytic theory: negativity results from the operation of repressed drives as those drives animate the subject and register in his language. Kristeva explains her transformation of the Hegelian dialectic in this way: "The logic [of the Hegelian dialectic] will become materialist when, with the help of Freud's discovery, one dares think negativity as the very movement of heterogeneous matter, inseparable from its differentiation's symbolic function" (113, emphasis hers).

Kristeva's analysis and evaluation of Hegelian negativity are somewhat confusing. On the one hand, she maintains that Hegelian negativity is a "dead end" (111), no more than a reified void, "the zero used in logic and serving at its base" or at most "a connective in the logical becoming" (112). Moreover, she claims, the stage of supersession within the Hegelian dialectic finally erases heterogeneity (112); in other words, according to Kristeva, the Hegelian dialectic, despite the movement generated by negativity, eliminates difference. And she adds: Supersession "subordinates, indeed erases, the moment of rupture" whereby the *thetic* is forced to confront its other (113). On the other hand, while Kristeva thus criticizes Hegelian negativity severely, she nevertheless acknowledges her own debt to his concept. Hegelian negativity, Kristeva admits, "prepared the way for the very possibility of thinking a materialist process" (110). What is more surprising, she finds a radical potential in Hegelian negativity even before its materialist revision: "We . . . maintain that Hegelian negativity prevents the immobilization of the *thetic*, unsettles *doxy*, and lets in all the semiotic motility that prepares and exceeds it" (113).

So here we have the crux of the matter: is Hegelian negativity a "dead end" that cancels difference, or is it the bearer of a motility that continuously disrupts all attempts to reify the status quo? Does it "[erase] the moment of rupture" or ceaselessly impel further ruptures in language and thought? Kristeva's apparent vacillation on this point brings the question into focus for us. To answer the question, we will examine Hegelian negativity more closely, especially as it relates to language. We will also consider the implications of negativity and language to Hegel's larger philosophical system.

HEGELIAN NEGATIVITY AND THE LANGUAGE OF PHILOSOPHY

For Hegel as for Kristeva, negativity facilitates the movement of the dialectic. Beyond this abstraction, however, Hegel's concept of negativity is somewhat

difficult to define, in part because Hegel's discussions of negativity are often couched in tropic language. In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, for example, Hegel describes "the tremendous power of the negative" as "the energy of thought," which he then figures as "Death, . . . of all things the most dreadful."⁷ Later in the *Phenomenology* he figures negativity as "the universal individual, the Earth, which as the universal negativity preserves the differences as they exist within itself" (178). Tropes such as these raise their own sets of questions, which we will consider later in the chapter. In any case, it is difficult to say just what Hegelian negativity is, beyond the abstraction that it is "the energy of thought." For the purposes of this chapter, we will define Hegelian negativity functionally, rather than ontologically, as that which creates the movement of dialectical thinking by impelling thought toward its opposite; it is that which compels thinking to confront its other.

It is important to recognize that negativity is not outside the dialectic, nor outside language, since, according to Hegel, there is no thought outside language. "To want to think without words . . . is . . . a manifestly irrational procedure," he says in the *Phenomenology* (221).⁸ Rather, negativity, the "energy of thought," must inhere within language itself. In the *Logic* (Part I of the *Encyclopedia*) Hegel describes negativity as the play of Being and Nothing within signification that leads to "a more precise specification and truer definition of the Absolute."⁹ Jean Hyppolite also places Hegelian negativity within language; it is that "which allows discourse to follow its course by going from determination to determination" (Hyppolite 1997, 12). Hegel did not discuss explicitly how negativity registers in language, to my knowledge. We might speculate that, since dialectical thinking is always in movement, the effects of negativity would be recognizable by the propensity of language itself to resist stasis. To investigate this possibility we will look more closely at what Hegel said about language, and the relation of language to thought.

In *Logic and Existence*, Hyppolite formulates as a coherent system passages on language scattered at various places throughout the Hegel texts, and it is to Hyppolite's interpretation of Hegel that we will now turn. Hyppolite argues that for Hegel language could appear in three authentic modes: the language of poetry, the language of philosophy, and the language of the analytic understanding, the latter as typified in the empirical sciences and mathematics. In brief, according to Hyppolite, the language of poetry is prereflective and creative; it shares with the other fine arts qualities of musicality, representation, and tone. The language of the analytic understanding, on the other hand, seeks fixity and determinacy of expression, ultimately as mathematical symbols. Finally, philosophical language is a synthesis of the languages of poetry and understanding "in a dialectic that engenders the totality of sense" (53).

A passage in the preface to the *Phenomenology* lends support to Hyppolite's interpretation of Hegel's language theory. Hegel says there that the

Notion is neither pure “material thinking”—the “picture-thinking” of poetic images—nor pure formalistic thinking, “free from all content,” an emphasis typical of the understanding. Rather, according to Hegel, the Notion moves spontaneously between these two extremes in an “immanent rhythm” (Hegel 1977, 35–36). Philosophical language, then—that capable of expressing the Notion—seems to be for Hegel the dialectic posited by Hyppolite.

NEGATIVITY AND THE LANGUAGE OF UNDERSTANDING

This dialectic that leads to Hegel’s philosophical language resembles in several ways the dialectic between symbolic and semiotic that forms Kristeva’s poetic language (a similarity that Kristeva does not acknowledge). Perhaps the most obvious parallel is between Kristeva’s symbolic mode of signification and Hegel’s language of understanding. The symbolic, it will be recalled, is recognized by fixed grammatical categories, monovalent meanings of terms, and syntactical rules. The goal of the symbolic is social stability and linguistic coherence.

Like Kristeva’s symbolic, Hegel’s language of understanding seeks stability in language and thought, including the preservation of fixed meanings. This form of discourse relies heavily on what Hegel calls the form of language (in contrast to language’s “raw materials”). Linguistic form is the “work of the analytic [understanding] which informs language with its categories: it is this logical instinct which gives rise to grammar.”¹⁰ Linguistic form includes fixed definitions of terms, determinate grammatical categories, and reliable rules for syntax: the very qualities that mark Kristeva’s symbolic.

The *Encyclopedia Logic*, which discusses the understanding as one stage in the evolution of consciousness, discusses the language typically valued by consciousness at this stage of its development. The understanding, first, seeks monovalent meanings; it asserts “the correctness of its definitions” (Hegel 1990, 61) and has no tolerance for contradiction. Hegel notes in the understanding the “tenacity which draws a hard and fast line between certain terms and others opposite to them” (52). Moreover, the understanding insists that categories and oppositions are “separated from each other by an infinite chasm, so that opposite categories can never get at each other” (53); for example, the understanding sees rigid separations between subject and predicate, and between different predicates (120–21). When faced with contradictory predicates for the same subject, the understanding makes “a forcible insistence on a single aspect, and a real effort to obscure and remove all consciousness of the other attribute which is involved” (133). Note the words Hegel uses in these passages: *tenacity*, *obstinacy*, *forcible insistence*, *effort to obscure*. As Hegel’s

diction suggests, the understanding seeks willfully to force a stasis on language that language itself may resist.

Indeed, Hegel seems to believe that language does resist attempts to render it static. As the dialectic is inherently mobile, so is the language that constitutes and expresses that thought. As an example of the movement of dialectical thought, and of the language in which this thought takes shape, Hegel cites the verb *to become*:

"To become" is the true expression for the resultant of "to be" and "not to be"; it is the unity of the two; but not only is it the unity, it is also inherent unrest—the unity, . . . which, through the diversity of Being and Nothing that is in it, is at war within itself. (131)

Another example of language "at war with itself" is exemplified by the verb *aufheben*, which means both to set aside for the purposes of annulment and to set aside for preservation. Hegel applauds this capacity of words to be multivalent:

This double usage of language, which gives to the same word a positive and negative meaning, . . . gives no ground for reproaching language as a cause of confusion. We should rather recognize in it the speculative spirit of our language rising above the mere "either-or" of understanding. (142)

Hegel here attributes to language a "speculative spirit" that enables it to resist the stasis sought by the understanding. The idea of *aufheben* used here as an example is, of course, the idea of the dialectic itself, which in the sublation of oppositions both unites the opposites (the "either-or") and preserves their differences. In this case the word, because it is multivalent, adequately expresses the movement of the concept it defines. This "speculative spirit" of language is also manifest within sentences. In the *Science of Logic* Hegel illustrates the involvement of syntax in the movement of dialectical thinking:

Now in so far as the proposition: being and nothing are the same, asserts the identity of these determinations, but, in fact, equally contains them both as distinguished, the proposition is self-contradictory and cancels itself out. Bearing this in mind and looking at the proposition more closely, we find that it has a movement which involves the spontaneous vanishing of the proposition itself. But in thus vanishing, there takes place in it that which is to constitute its own peculiar content, namely, becoming.¹¹

Just as thought is dialectical, then, so is the language in which thought is expressed. Hegel's discussion of *aufheben* and *to become*, discussed above, illustrate this dialectical quality of language at the level of vocabulary, and we have seen as well that syntax may be involved in the movement of dialectical thinking. In the following example, both syntax and grammatical categories are subject to dialectical movement:

It is the common opinion that being is rather the sheer other of nothing, and nothing is clearer than their absolute difference, and nothing seems easier than to be able to state it. (Hegel 1999, 90)

This sentence from the *Logic of Science* involves a sort of word play. Note that *nothing* is used as both a noun (a thematization) and a pronoun: a linguistic sublation of form and content that unites them into sense and yet preserves their difference. At the same time, forms of *to be* are both nominalizations and verbs. These sublations of grammatical categories leave Hegel's sentence, for all the fact that we seem to understand it, in a state of unrest.

These examples suggest that it is in the nature of language itself to resist stasis and, rather, to participate in the movement of dialectical thinking. We have speculated that this unrest, this movement, of language results from the negativity that inheres in it. Thus attempts by the understanding to reify meaning (and thought) through rigid enforcement of grammatical and syntactical rules, or strict adherence to monovalent vocabulary, will be unsuccessful.

Yet Hegel also acknowledges that the language of understanding, with its emphasis on linguistic form, is a necessary constituent of philosophical language: without form, there would be no language (of any kind) at all. The understanding enables philosophical concepts to be stated with relative precision and clarity, thanks to its (somewhat) stable definitions of terms and its (somewhat) reliable rules of grammar and syntax. To quote Hegel from the *Encyclopedia Logic*: "That philosophy never can get on without the understanding hardly calls for special remark. . . . [Philosophy's] foremost requirement is that every thought shall be grasped in its full precision, and nothing allowed to remain vague and indefinite" (115). The language of the understanding, then, provides philosophical discourse with exactitude and determinacy—with meaning—even though that determinacy is always subject to further movement as dialectical thought progresses.

The language of the understanding resembles Kristeva's symbolic in its emphasis on linguistic form and its quest for fixed meanings. Yet neither the symbolic nor the language of understanding stands by itself. According to Kristeva, the symbolic is always in a dialectic with semiotic signification, and poetic language is the result. According to Hyppolite, Hegel's language of understanding is also subject to a continuous dialectic with the language of poetry, with the language of philosophy as a result. In both cases, it is negativity that impels this dialectical movement within language. We will now turn to the other component of Hegel's language of philosophy, as Hyppolite understands that language. If Hyppolite is correct, we should find evidence that Hegel valued the language of poetry as a component of philosophical discourse. We will then ask whether poetic language plays a role in the concurrent movement of language and dialectical thinking—in other words, whether and in what way poetic language might also register the effects of negativity.

HEGEL'S LANGUAGE OF POETRY

While Hegel's language of poetry is not identical conceptually to Kristeva's semiotic, they have similar effects in terms of what might be called linguistic style.¹² We recall that the semiotic registers in language as polyvalent signs and symbols, connotation rather than denotation, and disrupted conventions of grammar and syntax. Its presence may also be recognized in a text by the tone and mood evoked through images and tropes, and by the musicality of signifiers. Hegel's language of poetry is also recognizable by its imagery, its tropes, its tone, and its potential to evoke emotions.¹³

A review of what Hegel wrote about poetic language will clarify these points. First, Hegel believed that the language of poetry, like all language, is comprised of both matter and form, which Hegel calls the "concrete nature of language." In poetry, however, the "raw materials" of language are more prominent as such than in other modes of signification. In the *Philosophy of Mind* Hegel argues that words (both singly and in combinations as images and tropes) have their origin in sensuous experience—color, smell, sound, taste, and touch. These experiences create mood and can lead to vocal expressions of emotion, for example as laughter, sighs, or weeping. Sensuous experiences, with their emotional weight and tonality, are stored as recollections, conscious or unconscious. They may eventually be represented in language as images and tropes, which will then evoke the mood associated with the original experience. When recollected sensations and emotions are expressed in language, they are "expelled," according to Hegel, thereby ridding the subject of any emotional pain associated with the experiences. "Articulate speech is thus the highest mode in which man rids himself of his internal sensations," Hegel claims, but "it is the writing of poetry especially that has the power to liberate one from emotional distress" (87–88).

All words originate in sensuous experience, or what Hegel calls "corporeity." Time and custom may obscure this origin, however:

These dull subconscious beginnings [of language] are deprived of their original importance and prominence by new influences, it may be by external agencies or by the needs of civilization. Having been originally sensuous intuitions, they are reduced to signs, and thus have only traces left of their original meaning. (Hegel 1975, 214)

We may conclude from this passage, then, that all words have in fact "traces" of their origin in bodily experience and emotion. Possibly it is these traces that, in part, contribute to the connotations of certain words, or to their multivalency.

While Kristeva would not be involved in the debate on the sensuous origin of words, her concept of the semiotic does resemble Hegel's "raw materials" of language in its connection to bodily experience and affect. Moreover,

Hegel, like Kristeva, posits an unconscious repository of sensory and emotional experiences, as designated by his trope of the “night-like pit” (204). And sensuous experiences, recollections of which are stored in this “pit,” may later be expressed in language as images and tropes, and the emotions associated with sense experience (and representations of that experience) may register in language as tone or mood.

But did Hegel see the images and tropes typical of poetic language as a viable, even necessary element of the language suitable for philosophy? On this question Hegel is not clear. The passage from the preface to the *Phenomenology* quoted earlier would seem to support this conclusion, in that it calls for a philosophical language moving between the two extremes of picture-thinking and formalism. Yet Hegel argues elsewhere that philosophical thought in its purest form would rise above both sensuous imagery and the emotions such imagery can evoke. In the *Science of Logic*, for example, he describes logic as “consciousness . . . busy with something remote from sensuous intuitions and aims, from feelings, from the merely imagined world of figurate conception. . . . [T]hought becomes at home in abstractions and in progressing by means of Notions free from sensuous substrata” (58–59). Yet even while calling for a consciousness free from “figurate conception” and “sensuous substrata,” Hegel speaks of thought “at home”; it seems difficult for Hegel to eliminate tropes—“figurate” language—entirely from his own philosophical discourse.

And, in fact, in the *Aesthetics* Hegel praises images and metaphors for clarifying meaning. Metaphors provide language with a “liveliness [which] consists in rendering things precise to the visual imagination, in providing a sensuous image to counteract the pure indefiniteness of the saying which is always general.”¹⁴ Metaphors also enable thought to be fluid: they speak to a spirit which is “not content with the simple, customary, and plain,” but which seeks “to move on to something else, to linger over various things” (406). He even seems to regard emotion as valuable to the grasping of ideas. Metaphors enable the “heart and passion . . . to express their own stormy passion and their grip on all sorts of ideas by correspondingly transferring them out into all sorts of cognate phenomena and by moving in images of the most varied kinds” (406). Given this movement of thought generated by images and tropes, we might conclude that they would be appropriate for philosophical discourse, in Hegel’s view.

Indeed, Hegel’s own philosophical texts are evidence that he found the images and tropes of poetic language useful. The *Phenomenology*, especially, is noteworthy for its vivid images and tropes, as illustrated by Hegel’s figures for negativity, among many others. An examination of some of these tropes will illustrate the potential of “figurate” language to generate movement of thought—but also its potential to unsettle ideas about which we might prefer certainty and to raise questions for which there are no definite answers.

Hegel's tropes for negativity suggest, not only that Hegel associates negativity with materiality and death, but also that he sometimes genders negativity as feminine. In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, as we have seen, Hegel figures "universal negativity," the "universal individual," as the Earth. Elsewhere in the *Phenomenology* Hegel refers to one manifestation of the "Earth-Spirit" as the "feminine principle of nourishment" (437). Might we conclude from these tropes that universal negativity is not only the Earth as feminine but, in the latter case, maternal?

But are these phrases actually tropes (personifications), or are they literal references to physical matter? We have seen that Hegel's philosophical language may sublate either/or grammatical categories, such as literal versus figurative usage. In his discussion of culture, Hegel describes burial rites, during which the corpse is literally returned to the earth: the Family "weds the blood-relation to the bosom of the earth, to the elemental imperishable individuality" (271). The Earth in this passage appears to be both physical matter (the ground into which the corpse is laid) and a trope for "imperishable individuality," an abstraction. Again the Earth as "elemental individuality" (already identified as "absolute negativity") appears to be feminine, this time a bride.

In another gendered trope, Hegel describes absolute negativity as death in which the human being is "quite unmanned, . . . and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations" (Hegel 1977, 117). The emasculation alluded to in this trope suggests that the work of negativity may in some sense challenge masculine control, which seeks to ensure the durability of "everything stable and solid." In the discussion of state power, Hegel describes human law as "the manhood of the community, in its real and effective activity [as] the government" (287); womankind, on the other hand, is "the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community" (288). The masculine seems, then, to be associated with the order brought about by a strong state that enforces the law. Negativity, troped as feminine, disrupts stability and order, which the Western patriarchy traditionally has sought to ensure; the feminine challenges the hegemony of laws enacted to enforce the status quo. Were we to make an analogy with Hegel's language theory, would we gender linguistic form as masculine, and the negativity that registers in language—and disrupts stable meanings—as feminine? Such a tentative analogy would suggest another link between Hegel and Kristeva, who genders the symbolic as patriarchal and the semiotic as feminine.

What are we, as readers of Hegel's texts, to make of these tropes? Taken seriously as part of his philosophical discourse, they suggest a gendering of some of Hegel's most fundamental concepts—surely an outrageous possibility for conventional philosophical thought. The implications of such a possibility are beyond the scope of this chapter to explore. But they exemplify the ability of tropes, Hegel's "figurate" language, to force thinking to move beyond the security of ideas previously unquestioned. In sum, if we seriously attend to

Hegel's images and tropes—his poetic language—they may force us to think his concepts in a different way.

Of course, we might ignore Hegel's tropes and other elements of poetic language in his philosophical discourse. Some readers might conclude, in fact, that these elements detract from Hegel's texts, that his philosophy would be stronger and clearer if it sought the goal, outlined in the *Science of Logic*, of notions stated purely in abstract language, free of figures. But we have seen that philosophical discourse free of poetic language would provide no refuge from ambiguity and contradiction. All language, according to Hegel, is in a state of unrest, even language entirely abstract: "Every abstract proposition of understanding, taken precisely as it is given, naturally veers round into its opposite," he says in the *Encyclopedia Logic* (117). Language has a "speculative spirit," Hegel believes, and because negativity inheres within language, language (and thought) will never be at rest.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter began with the claim, made by many twentieth-century philosophers, that Hegel's philosophy is totalizing. It then examined the specific arguments of Julia Kristeva, who, while judging Hegel severely for eliminating difference, nevertheless uses Hegel's concept of negativity in the development of her own nontotalizing language theory. One of the findings of this chapter is that Hegel's theory of language is much closer to Kristeva's theory than she recognizes. We have noticed similarities between Kristeva's symbolic mode of signification and Hegel's language of understanding, more limited similarities between her semiotic and Hegel's language of poetry, and a linguistic dialectic in the theories of both in which negativity is a key term.

The primary focus of the chapter has been an examination of Kristeva's inconsistent assessments of Hegelian negativity: whether Hegel's negativity is a "dead end," as she charges at one point, or whether it "unsettles doxy" and introduces mobility into language, as she acknowledges later. An examination of what Hegel says about language, and an analysis of his own philosophical discourse, have suggested that the charge of totalization is inaccurate. Kristeva claims that supersession eliminates difference and erases the moment of rupture of the *thetic*. But even in supersession, negativity is not eliminated, in that the supersession is thought in and through language. At the moment of supersession, negativity is already at work in its destabilization, effecting a new rupture, a renewed confrontation with difference.

"Thoughts become fluid when pure thinking . . . recognizes itself as a moment," Hegel says in the preface to the *Phenomenology* (20). For Hegel, it is possible for thought to remain fluid because language itself is in a state of unrest, as evidenced by multivalent vocabulary, grammatical and syntactical

ambiguity, and the images and tropes found in both poetry and philosophical discourse. Even should consciousness reach the goal envisioned by Hegel at which the Notion is grasped in the abstract, without figurate language or emotion, language in its “speculative spirit” would still register the movement generated by negativity. Language—and thought—will never reach stasis, but will rather remain in endless movement—the infinite spiral posited by Hannah Arendt. For as long as language is spoken, negativity, registering in language, will give voice to difference, to the other. As such, Hegelian negativity effects a continuous and infinite disruption of the status quo, a revolution in and through the language of philosophy.

NOTES

1. Jean Hyppolite. Leonard Lawlor, and Amit Sen, trans., *Logic and Existence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 53, emphasis added.

2. William Maker. *Philosophy without Foundations: Rethinking Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); John McCumber, *The Company of Words: Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

3. Hannah Arendt. *The Life of the Mind* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1971), pp. 48–49.

4. Because (as Hyppolite interprets Hegel) language speaks the subject, the Hegelian subject will also be continuously in the process of transformation, or as Kristeva would have it, a subject *en process*, in process/on trial. It would be possible to compare Kristeva's and Hegel's theories of subjectivity in relation to language, but this topic is beyond the scope of the present work.

5. Julia Kristeva. Margaret Waller, trans., *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 3.

6. Kristeva, 33. Hegel also considered negativity to be the dialectic's fourth term. See *Science of Logic* II, 478–79, as cited in Kristeva.

7. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 19.

8. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel makes a similar point: “what is called the unutterable is nothing else than the untrue, the irrational” (66). Hyppolite puts it this way: “The progress of thought, its development, is the very progress of expression. . . . Sense unfolds itself and determines itself without its being given previously in an ineffable form” (21).

9. *Hegel's Logic, Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 128.

10. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 215.

11. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity, 1999), p. 90.

12. The differences between Hegel's language of poetry and Kristeva's semiotic should not be minimized. The most obvious difference is that Kristeva's concept of the

semiotic is based on psychoanalytic theory, including the effects of repressed drives on language. This theory enables Kristeva to explain linguistic phenomena that Hegel, for the most part, merely describes.

13. Hyppolite believes that Hegel's language of poetry, like Kristeva's semiotic, is also evidenced by musicality of language. Jean-Luc Nancy makes a similar point in *The Speculative Remark*, trans. Céline Surprenant (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

14. *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. II, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 406.

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CHAPTER 12

Speculative Rhythm

Katrin Pahl

Rhythmically, Hegel's language verges on poetry. With the following analysis of Hegel's discussion of philosophical form in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I seek to show that Hegel calls for a philosophical language that combines two different logics in rhythmical interaction—the largely Aristotelian logic that rules traditional philosophical discourse, and a Hegelian speculative logic. With my emphasis on rhythm, I hope to problematize the still prevalent understanding of Hegel's philosophy as totalizing. This chapter suggests that the rhythmic quality of Hegel's language interrupts the thrust of linear progression usually perceived as the dominant force of this text. The metrical correlation of conflicting logics opens the focus on self-knowledge onto alterity, thereby providing the condition of possibility for an ethical relation to (Hegelian) philosophy's other.

CONCEPTS

Rhythm enters and transforms the pure formality of logical discourse when Hegel radically redefines the notions of the concept and the judgment in traditional logic. In the ordinary sense of the term, concepts are general and abstract ideas in the mind, empty containers, or as Hegel puts it, “inert receptacles” that need to be filled with the concrete material of experience.¹ Kant famously refers to concepts without intuitions as void, underlining their status as subjective forms of representation that call for objective content.² Hegel mediates the abstract separation between subject and object, form and content, and logic and reality by way of his novel definition of the concept. He understands the Concept (Begriff) as reaching through (durchgreifen) these divisions transforming them in the process. The firm distinction between logic and reality is rendered dynamic in the Concept's self-mediation, in the course of which the Concept unfolds its own reality and reality conceptualizes

itself. Hegel radically redefines truth not as a passive object waiting to be discovered, but as a subject. With “subject” he means the active and dynamic process of negotiating the conflicting demands of self-othering and self-reflecting. For him, this movement of self-mediation through self-negation is not peculiar to human subjectivity, as we would tend to see it today.³

Kant’s demand that “an abstract conception be *made sensuous*” thereby becomes superfluous because the conception makes itself sensuous when differentiating itself in the *Ur-teil*, the primary differentiation or the judgment.⁴ For Hegel, the judgment is no abstract logical form, but it takes concrete shape as a living body (“the judgment of the plant,” for example, develops out of the unity of the germ), or as a thing (“all things are a judgment”), or as the material reality of a sentence.⁵ In and across the self-differentiation of the *Urteil*, the Concept remains whole as “every function and ‘moment’ of the Concept is itself the whole Concept.”⁶ In each of its judgments, the Concept thus takes both logical and physical shape, and presents itself as both universal and singular.

Nevertheless, the material reality of Hegel’s Concept is easy to overlook because Hegel’s modification of the traditional use of the word “concept” is so radical that it is difficult to accept. Most interpretations of the Hegelian text, even the best, have in fact abandoned the Concept’s materiality in favor of an understanding of the Concept as metaphysical abstraction. Derrida, for example, offers a weak reading of the notion of the Concept when he writes that for Hegel, “language accomplishes itself, thus becomes signifying only by relieving within itself the (sensible, exterior) signifier, traversing it and denying it with a view to the concept.” For Derrida—and this does not go without identifying Hegel’s philosophy with Prussian authoritarianism—“the logic of the concept is the eagle’s.”⁷

Against such hasty flights, I will try to remain with Hegel’s text for a little longer. I will traverse it back and forth in an attempt to bring its body to life again and again as a warm body. After the motionless flight of the eagle through the very high cold regions of the sky, we might then begin to notice the *Phenomenology*’s eagle dance: close to the ground, “very lowly, low down, close to the earth.”⁸ In this dance, the eagle transforms into an *Igel* (hedgehog). This *Igel* responds to a multitude of at times contradictory calls in the complex rhythm of its dance—it saves itself yet loses itself curling up into a tight ball or crossing the road slowly with hundreds of swift little steps.

Igel is another of poetry’s names. It echoes in my German ear as Derrida’s *hérisson* or *istrice* offered as answers to the question of an Italian poetry journal: “*Che cos’è la poesia?*”—“What kind of thing is poetry?”⁹ The poetry of Hegel’s philosophical language restores thought to its body.¹⁰ Characteristically, poetic language does not vanish in understanding, it does not like an eagle “leave with one wing stroke the natal ground.”¹¹ Unable to translate poetry into plain language, we remain attached to the signifier. In this incli-

nation toward the concrete materiality of language, we begin to notice sensuous relations between words. Between *Igel* and eagle we dance for a long while in place, until the senses multiply and urge thought to move in more than one direction.

Poetry sets the eagle on its feet. There, standing on the ground, in an unfamiliar element and in this awkward position, the eagle becomes vulnerable—like the *Igel* in Derrida's text who at the approach of an automobile and terrified by the screaming monotony of its mechanical rhythm curls up in the middle of the road into a hermetically sealed ball.

JUDGMENTS

Hegel's redefinition of the notion of the concept has an effect on the status of philosophical language in general. The movement of the Concept undermines any clean-cut distinctions that traditional logic tries to enforce. For Hegel, language, thought, and reality are intertwined. One possible reality of the Concept is language. The "kind of writing" (*Schreibart*) must therefore be of great concern for Hegel when he embarks on the project of the *Phenomenology*—that is, to present Spirit as it appears to itself.¹² It comes as no surprise, therefore, that he devotes an important part of the *Phenomenology's* preface to his thoughts on the form of philosophical exposition.¹³

In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel introduces the speculative proposition as a kind of writing that critiques and disarticulates the traditional form of philosophical writing that he identifies as the judgment.¹⁴ The logical judgment is a proposition that is either composed of, or can be logically reduced to three parts: the subject, the copula, and the predicate. The logical judgment provides the formally correct answer to the implicitly metaphysical question, What is x?

Hegel denounces the logical judgment as the symptom of a rigid, overly clean-cut and hierarchical logic. He shows that its claim to simplicity and clarity only superficially covers up the conflicts it actually harbors. According to Hegel's analysis, every judgment shows a discord between what it means and what it says. The judgment means that subject and predicate are identical—A is B—but the body of the sentence presents them as separated: it consists of two different terms, A and B, with the copula physically standing in-between the two, holding them apart. The materiality of the judgment is at odds with its meaning with regard to the difference or identity of its terms. The meaning repudiates difference while the body exhibits it: "The sense seems to be that the difference is denied, although at the same time it appears directly in the proposition."¹⁵ In this situation, "Reasoning" or *Räsonnieren*—as Hegel calls the purely formal production of judgments—pursues its desire for a simple identity "solving" the conflict by establishing a hierarchy.¹⁶

Abstract rationality prefers logic to reality. The body of the text is rejected once the meaning is retained.

But the judgment contradicts itself in more ways than one. Not only does its meaning and its physical performance fail to coincide, it also does not agree with what it means. If the judgment is meant to express the identity of subject and predicate, this identity is at the same time prohibited by the rules of its logic.¹⁷ According to the logic of the judgment, the predicate must not be the same as the subject. If they are the same, the proposition doesn't make any sense; it is, as Hegel observes, commonly rejected as saying nothing: "If, for example, to the question 'What is a plant?' the answer is given 'A plant is . . . a plant,' the truth of such a statement is at once admitted by the entire company on whom it is tested, and at the same time it is equally unanimously declared that the statement says *nothing*."¹⁸ "A rose is a rose" says nothing, supposedly. The predicate has to be different from the subject, and difference, logically, is understood as subordination. The subject in its particularity is supposed to be subjected to the universality of the predicate. Even if subject and predicate are different but equal, the proposition does not form a logical judgment because it is impossible to decide which term should govern the "identity" of the two. Does "Poetry is a hedgehog" say anything? Can we subsume "poetry" under "hedgehog"? The proposition is grammatically correct, but it is no judgment. According to formal logic, it provides no satisfying answer to the question What is poetry? because it doesn't establish a hierarchy. Logical authority prescribes its rules of intelligibility. In order for the predicate to say anything about (*über*) the subject, it has to be higher, more general, and more descriptive than the subject, which must be lower, more particular, and without the ability to speak.¹⁹

Again the conflict is managed—or attempted to be managed—by introducing a hierarchy: the order of the judgment must not be reversed: A (viz. every) rose is a plant, but that does not mean that every plant is a rose. Or, to cast this in more humanistic, albeit not necessarily human terms: Socrates is a man, but not every man is Socrates. Here, the logic of ratiocination betrays its inherent violence. According to the Enlightenment and in keeping with its humanist values, every human being is endowed with the faculty of understanding. This faculty allows man to make judgments, construe arguments, and engage in public reasoning. If we follow the logic of the judgment, though, it turns out that only those who subject themselves to Socrates can claim reason, while the name of Socrates is to be read as shorthand for the canon of Western philosophy. How can a language that is based on the assumption that not every human being is a Socrates convince every human being of its philosophical truths? This question preoccupies Hegel in his early writings on religion and community. With Hölderlin and Schelling, he comes to the conclusion that this language needs to change. In the *Oldest System Program of German Idealism*, they urge "the philosopher must possess as much

aesthetic capacity as the poet.”²⁰ The philosopher must be able to open philosophical discourse to the sensuous qualities and the rhythm of poetry. Only then can she address and undo the discrimination this language surreptitiously transports. Against segregation “the enlightened and the unenlightened finally have to join hands” and dance.²¹

SPECULATIVE PROPOSITIONS

Instead of the clean-cut logic of the judgment, which separates enlightened from unenlightened, Hegel proposes the speculative proposition. Against the denial of conflict in the hierarchical organization of subject and predicate, body and meaning, or difference and identity, Hegel affirms “the *non-identical* aspect of subject and predicate is also an essential moment.”²² While “in the judgement this is not expressed,” the speculative proposition reveals their difference, thereby enabling a complex and moving interplay, a nonhierarchical and delicate harmony: the dance of the *Igel* with the eagle.²³

Yet, there is no programmatic use of speculative sentences in Hegel’s work. Lacking extensive evidence, we are hard-pressed to determine what a speculative proposition actually looks or sounds like.²⁴ Hegel’s speculative logic doesn’t take shape by modifying traditional syntax. He offers no speculative style of writing that would disable an abstract, formal, or *räsonnierende* logic. The “speculative proposition” is no innovative “kind of writing,” but rather Hegel’s perhaps somewhat awkward term for a new way of reading.

Speculative reading refuses to reduce propositions to a single meaning. The speculative reader regards subject and predicate as equal in value and in their ability to speak. She acknowledges their union as one that allows for difference, and stays attuned to their absolute difference, which accepts being expressed as identity: “Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.”²⁵ While Rose is ceaselessly signifying rose and multiplying the singular without aspiration to the universal, the repetition brings forth her self-differentiability.²⁶ The speculative reader attends to the movement of the proposition’s unfolding over and against any arresting identification. In the absence of a ready example of a Hegelian speculative proposition, we have drawn upon poetry “proper,” but like Rose, who is a rose is a rose is a rose, the different figures of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* articulate a speculative proposition in progress while consciousness reads itself differently in each of its shapes: Consciousness is a consciousness is a consciousness is a consciousness. The *Phenomenology* in its entirety provides the speculative reading of this one judgment: the self-differentiation of Spirit, the way Spirit appears to itself by negating itself again and again. This kind of close reading actively undermines the logic of the judgment by refusing to give a quick or final answer to the question, What

is Spirit? In fact Hegel refuses to give a straightforward answer to any question formulated as What is X? including the question, What is a speculative proposition?²⁷ “We shall not *reply* to the question: Hegelian discourse nowhere does so. But it is against it, along it, or on its edge, that we shall see Hegelian discourse being laid out, used, and scattered, to the very extent that it is forced to change its form.”²⁸ Against the answer in the form of the judgment, speculative writing prolongs the reading. And as this reading takes shape running here and there, to and fro in endless repetition, Hegel’s discourse transforms, if ever so slightly. It begins to verge on poetry.

But how are we to understand this “against” in the Hegelian context? It certainly indicates opposition, but also proximity and support (as in “leaning against”). The speculative proposition relies on the judgment. It is no accident that Hegel introduces the speculative proposition by way of the nonspeculative proposition. The judgment provides the physical substratum for Hegel’s speculative proposition. Speculative propositions don’t appear as material sentences, at least not in any systematic way. Hegel conceives of the speculative as a movement, yet every sentence (*Satz*) is set (*gesetzt*) under the controlling gaze of grammatical and logical laws (*Gesetze*), which Hegel is not ready to break. The sentence only moves when it is read.

Hegel’s texts model speculative reading. Even if he did not write poetry (which is by no means decided) he is a critic and a close reader with enormous “aesthetic capacity” (to echo the *Oldest System Program*). His writings are readings of the poetry he might never actually write.²⁹

Hegel meticulously reads the judgment of Spirit in every possible direction. Again and again he registers differences and lays them out for the reader, thus offering a “systematic exposition” (*Darstellung*) of “the dialectical movement of the proposition itself,” an account of the “speculative *in act*.”³⁰ Yet in this unfolding of differences, he perpetuates the use of traditional philosophical syntax: “we should bear in mind that the dialectical movement likewise has propositions for its parts or elements; the difficulty just indicated seems, therefore, to recur perpetually.”³¹ Hegel communicates his speculative readings in conventional philosophical form. This makes them dependent on further acts of speculative reading.

What is meant as interplay between judgment and speculative proposition can always be read simply as judgment. “The philosophical proposition, since it is a proposition [a *Satz*], leads one to believe that the usual subject-predicate relation obtains, as well as the usual attitude towards knowing.”³² Herein lies the passion of the new science and the reason why the *Phenomenology* needs the reader so urgently, needs to be read, to be read in a certain way, that is, speculatively. Otherwise the entire enterprise fails. The most vital question for Hegel the writer is thus, how to seduce the reader to read his propositions speculatively.

AN INVITATION TO DANCE

How does Hegel seduce his readers? He draws in those who expect conventional philosophical discourse by indeed speaking their language. Hegel integrates the form and logic of the judgment into his writing even though he considers it inappropriate for speculative philosophy. In the *Science of Logic*, he warns: "We must, at the outset, make this general observation, namely, that the proposition in the *form of the judgement* is not suited to express speculative truths."³³ According to the principles of his systematic philosophy, judgments have no place in philosophical discourse: "In keeping with our insight into the nature of speculation, the exposition should preserve the dialectical form, and should admit nothing except in so far as it is comprehended, and is the Concept."³⁴ Against his own warning, Hegel admits them and invites them in. He hosts the foreign logic in his own system, a dangerous move that, one might say, has proven detrimental to his philosophical aims. Yet this unfaithfulness to his principles alone allows him to respond to the historical reality of philosophical discourse, to relate to non-Hegelian thought, and ultimately to remain faithful to his own thinking. It would be quite un-Hegelian to abstractly oppose tradition. Hegel develops his system unsystematically as an open system, susceptible to its others including traditional logic. At the same time, he opens conventional logic to the poetic rhythm of the speculative.

This inclusive attitude upsets both speculative and formal thought. Hegel embraces the very logic that ostracizes the speculative. He invites trouble into the heart of his philosophy. Similarly, traditional logic does not persist untouched in this appropriation. Kant had renewed Aristotle's definition of dialectics as a logic of illusion, thereby denying dialectical thinking the right to operate on the basis of syllogisms.³⁵ According to an extensive philosophical tradition, the tools of conventional ratiocination remain unavailable to Hegel as he himself concedes in the *Phenomenology*: "once the dialectic has been separated from proof, the notion of philosophical demonstration has been lost."³⁶ When he continues to use judgments and syllogisms, he therefore does so necessarily in an ironic fashion. With his "improper" use of formal logic, he subverts its tools. Hegel rhythmizes traditional logic when he transplants judgments and syllogisms into an environment that is foreign to them. He disrupts their set mechanism when he integrates them into the movement of the Concept. As we will see in more detail in a moment, the speculative cuts the ground from under the feet of the rationalist consciousness. In the hands of speculative thinking, formal logic forfeits the foundations of its reasoning: the ability to establish grounds and advance safely from reason to reason. This leaves formal logic with two possibilities: either it will stumble, or it will begin to dance.

SPECULATIVE RHYTHM

The rhythm of Hegel's dynamic expositions is produced by the interplay between the two possibilities of philosophically reading any given proposition: speculatively or as judgment. In rhythmic correspondence, they partake in one another while taking each other apart, multiplying and proliferating across a net of moving intervals rather than a hierarchy of subsuming synthesis.³⁷ The dance of the *Igel* crosses the dance of the Eagle without crossing it out. Hegel actually speaks of a "harmony" between the two:

This conflict between the general form of a proposition and the unity of the Concept which destroys it is similar to the conflict that occurs in rhythm between meter and accent. Rhythm results from the floating centre and the unification of the two. So, too, in the philosophical proposition the identification of Subject and Predicate is not meant to destroy the difference between them, which the form of the proposition expresses; their unity, rather, is meant to emerge as a harmony.³⁸

This passage again renders the friction between reading as judgment and speculative reading as a conflict between identity and difference. For Hegel, this conflict does not have to be solved in favor of one term, but can be made productive as a harmonic dis-unity in motion. He does not relieve the tension between identity and difference in a stable synthesis (no matter how insistently the third step of the dialectical three-step is read as such), but leaving their relation open he keeps them suspended in a "floating center" (*schwebende Mitte*). The center shifts, the mean is not a universal principle as in traditional logic, but itself a movement. The new speculative syllogism links two movements in rhythmic interaction. The stable structure of traditional logic is suspended and harmony can only be maintained if each party keeps moving. In this complex rhythm, accent and meter sometimes work with each other, sometimes against each other, always enhancing each other and their flexible bind.

The speculative deals a "counterthrust" to the normal accentuation of discursive language; it adds an unanticipated attack: "The general nature of the judgement or proposition . . . is destroyed by the speculative proposition . . . which . . . contains the counter-thrust against that subject-predicate relationship."³⁹ Speculative reading accentuates the steady beat of logical language in unexpected ways. It syncopates its meter. Increasing the complexity of its rhythm, it raises the poetic level of philosophical language.

The judgment already has a certain prose rhythm. The proposition's accent naturally, that is without much art, lies on the first word: the subject. The meter is organized around the regularity with which the subject reappears as the first stress of the sentence. In the proposition read as judgment, both terms, subject and predicate, are abstractions severed from the movement of the Concept. As abstract universality, the predicate remains devoid of mater-

ial content. This materiality is provided by the subject, which, mute and stationary, “inertly support[s] the Accidents.”⁴⁰ As such, “this Subject constitutes the basis” for the succession of beats.⁴¹ It supplies the “solid ground” (*feste Boden*) for a regular rhythm: Óne two three. Á is B. Gód is X. Póetry is Y. A very simple rhythm.

Speculative reading introduces a disruptive accent that syncopates the mechanical course of the proposition. In the sentence “God is being,” the second term “being,” when read speculatively, trades the abstract universality of the predicate for the dynamic self-mediation of the Subject in Hegel’s sense. In the movement from the first to the second term, the subject, thus, reappears, as in “Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.” “Thinking, instead of making progress in the transition from Subject to Predicate, . . . finds the Subject immediately in the Predicate.”⁴² The predicate is entangled in the subject. The note of the subject lasts through the beat of what is usually the predicate. The reader finds the attack on the third count lacking, she “feels [her]self checked” (*gehemmt*), left hanging at the end of the proposition with one foot in the air. The proposition breaks off in an enjambment. The sentence hasn’t come to a full stop yet. Trying to figure out where to rest the foot, the reader “is thrown back onto the thought of the subject.”⁴³ She pivots on one foot. Yet in her attempt to find the subject, she realizes that the accent on the first count is lost too. The subject, “God” in the case of Hegel’s example, has desisted from providing the stable basis for the movement of the attributes. Instead, it enters into self-reflection: “‘Being’ is here meant to be not a Predicate, but rather the essence; it seems, consequently, that God ceases to be what he is from his position in the proposition, viz. a fixed Subject.”⁴⁴ Speculative reading turns an abstract subject into the concrete Concept. Instead of referring to an object outside of language, the term in the subject position now presents the object as Subject in Hegel’s emphatic sense, that is, as the agent of its own movement, or as a reality that writes itself: “Since the Concept is the object’s own self, which presents itself as the *coming-to-be of the object*, it is not a passive Subject inertly supporting the Accidents; it is, on the contrary, the self-moving Concept which takes its determinations back into itself.”⁴⁵

The subject makes her own sense. Realizing this, the reader has lost her former definition of the subject: “In this movement the passive Subject itself perishes.”⁴⁶ After “the loss of the Subject,” the suspended foot is thrown back upon the ground with the count of the predicate, yet not in order to land and resume its predetermined choreography.⁴⁷ With this awkward pirouette, the reader, losing her footing on this ground that shifts (*schwankt*) between subject and predicate, falls into the arms of the Subject now understood as self-reflexive subject matter: “Thinking therefore loses the firm objective basis [*Boden*] it had in the subject when, in the predicate, it is thrown back on to it, and when, in the predicate, it does not return into itself, but into the subject of the content.”⁴⁸

The subject matter speaks. Driving the speculative movement, the "Subject enters into the determinations themselves and is their soul."⁴⁹ Hegel suggests here that what we are used to calling content, subject matter, or object in fact authors the the speculative proposition. As such, it is equal to the reader, an equally self-reflexive subject, moving force, or soul. To read a proposition speculatively means to communicate with its soul, to rejoin the delicate movement of the subject matter, to join hands with another subject and dance. Moved by the Concept, the reader is unable to dissociate herself from the content of her reading. Drawn into the dance, she finds that she is not grounded in herself, but depends on the other, the one whom she reads, to hold her. The formal separations of subject and predicate, reader and author, form of exposition and content are disarticulated in this dance of the speculative proposition.

But consciousness loathes giving up control. Hegel, thus, exerts a certain violence when he seduces the reader to read the judgment speculatively. His diction betrays that violence. According to his description, the reading subject "suffers." It "feels itself checked . . . and thrown back." It heaves "complaints."⁵⁰ Hegel's poetry interferes with the reader's wish to finish the text. It prevents her from reducing the charged potentiality of the proposition immediately to one meaning:

Since that first Subject [subject of the proposition] enters into the determinations [predicate] themselves and is their soul, the second Subject, viz. the knowing "I," still finds in the Predicate what it thought it had finished with and got *away from*, and from which it hoped to return into itself; and, instead of being able to function as the determining agent in the movement of predication . . . it is still occupied with the self of the content, having to remain *associated with* it, instead of being for itself.⁵¹

Hegel frustrates the reader's desire to withdraw as quickly as possible from the contact with the other into the aloof identity and superior authority of the "I."

With his opaque writing, he responds to the violence he registers in conventional reading acts. Hegel specifies that the simple meaning "formal thinking" (*formales Denken*) retains by avoiding the difficulty of reading that lies in abandoning one's own authority to the movement of the Concept is, in fact, a negative one, or simply the negation of the subject matter: "Such reasoning adopts a negative attitude towards the content it apprehends; it knows how to refute it and destroy it."⁵² The rational reader has everything already understood. Or she quickly makes up her mind and says: "'Rose is a rose' means nothing."

The reading subject is able to exert this violence because she positions herself in a hierarchy above the object: "Instead of entering into the immanent content of the thing, it is forever surveying the whole and standing above the particular existence of which it is speaking, i.e. it does not see it at all. Scientific cognition, on the contrary, demands surrender to the life of the object."⁵³

From the scientific thinker, that is, the speculative reader, Hegel requires commitment to the life of the subject matter. This includes the even more difficult surrender to the reader's own life, her own negativity. Whether negatively or positively, whether negated as nothingness or affirmed as life, the self-negation that beats at the heart of the different movements of self-mediation of these different subjects (reading subject and subject matter) communicates across the intervals of their beats: "Because this reflection does not get its very negativity as its content, it is never at the *heart* of the *matter*."⁵⁴ As a way of denying her own negativity or self-differentiability, her own life as a subject matter, the reasoning "I" projects negativity in the form of simple nothingness onto her object. But the other's alleged nothingness reflects only the pettiness of its beholder: "Formal thinking is reflection into the empty 'I,' the vanity of its own knowing. This vanity, however, expresses not only the vanity of this content, but also the futility of this insight itself."⁵⁵ The contemptuous statement "'Rose is a rose' says nothing" only shows the reader's own lack of heart.

In order to entice the reader into staying at the heart of the matter, giving up her superior authority, and moving with the content instead of above the content, Hegel himself has to write with instead of about and above (*über*) the subject matter. But, in order to introduce the speculative movement of the subject matter to the reading subject, Hegel has to write with the reader. If he wants to stand a chance of being accepted when asking the reader for a dance, Hegel needs to speak the language of his philosophical audience, the language of judgments, or of formal logic. Yet, if he intends to seduce the reader to read speculatively he cannot allow her to rest above the movement of the Concept. He has to make sure that "the solid ground which formal logic has in the passive Subject is . . . shaken."⁵⁶

The conservative philosophical reader responds by trying to reinforce the foundations. But in order to do so she has to turn around and repeat her reading, thus becoming caught up in the dance of the speculative. Reading Hegel's prose resembles reading a poem aloud: one hesitates as to where to put the accent—is it in accordance with the meter, or with the syntax, or with the stress of the meaning? What if all three differ from one another? Where to articulate the beat? When to rest the foot? The reader feels herself checked halfway through the sentence, gets lost, is forced to go back, to repeat the reading, and to find the subject. Subject and predicate exchange position. Back and forth. Unlike the judgment, which is irreversible by law, the speculative proposition breaks with the linearity of *logos*. Like poetry, which forces us to turn at the end of the verse (*versus*), it has to be read backward and forward in a reading act that transforms discursive language into a multidimensional web arousing the reader to multiply connections while throwing her around in the rhythm of its beats.⁵⁷

Hegel writes a poetry that partakes in formal logic while taking it apart. His strategy of seduction does not only embroil his readers in the movement

of the speculative, it also leaves his own writing to be trapped by the logic of the judgment. Hegel offers no form of writing that would unambiguously express speculative movements. The speculative proposition exists only in reading. It thus attains no exteriority, not even—since we can safely assume that barely anybody ever recites philosophy—the sound of speech that vanishes quickly without leaving a trace. In order to appear, speculative movements borrow the form of the judgment, of the proposition (*Satz*) set (*gesetzt*) in writing. At the heart of its movement of self-reflection, when it is about to appear to itself, Spirit abandons itself to its other. Whether it will grasp itself across that difference remains an open question.

NOTES

1. G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. and index (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), vol. 8, section 162, “gleichgültige Behälter.” English translation by William Wallace, *Hegel's Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). Further references will be given in the form *Enz.* (1830), section 162.

2. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1990), 45.

3. See *Phenomenology* 9–10: “In my view, . . . everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*. . . . Further, the living Substance is being which is in truth *Subject*, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself. This Substance is, as Subject, pure, *simple negativity*.” Original: “Es kommt nach meiner Einsicht . . . alles darauf an, das Wahre nicht als *Substanz*, sondern eben so sehr als *Subjekt* aufzufassen und auszudrücken. . . . Die lebendige Substanz ist ferner das Sein, welches in Wahrheit *Subjekt*, oder was dasselbe heißt, welches in Wahrheit wirklich ist, nur insofern sie die Bewegung des sich selbst Setzens, oder die Vermittlung des sich anders Werdens mit sich selbst ist. Sie ist als Subjekt die reine *einfache Negativität*.” G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988), 13–14. English translation by A. V. Miller, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). Further references will be given in the form *Phen.* 34; 42, with the first page number referring to the translation, the second to the original. Wherever the wording is particularly important for my analysis, I will offer my own translations.

4. Kant, 159. German: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956), B299, “einen abgesonderten Begriff sinnlich zu machen.” See *Enz.* (1830), section 166 Zusatz, “This disruption of the concept into the difference of its constituent functions—a disruption imposed by the native act of the concept—is the judgement” (“diese durch die eigene Tätigkeit des Begriffs gesetzte Divergenz desselben in den Unterschied seiner Momente ist das Urteil”).

5. *Enz.* (1830), section 166 Zusatz, “So enthält z.B. . . . der Keim einer Pflanze . . . bereits das Besondere der Wurzel, der Zweige, der Blätter usw., allein dies

Besondere . . . wird erst gesetzt, indem der Keim sich erschließt, welches als das Urteil der Pflanze zu betrachten ist." *Enz.* (1830), section 167, "Alle Dinge sind ein Urteil."

6. *Enz.* (1830), section 163, "jedes Moment des Begriffs ist selbst der ganze Begriff." Because the logic of the Concept turns fixed and clear-cut divisions into dynamic differences and articulates distinctions as differences within rather than between concepts, Hegel uses the term consistently in the singular. This has led to misunderstandings of the Concept as a metaphysical entity.

7. Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 9a; 55a.

8. Jacques Derrida, "Che cos'è la poesia?" Trans. Peggy Kamuf, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 234.

9. Derrida finds the simile in the German context, in Friedrich Schlegel's work, to be precise, who uses it to describe his favorite incarnation of Romantic poetry: the fragment. Athenäum Fragment 206: "Ein Fragment muß gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel." *Kritische Friedrich—Schlegel—Ausgabe Vol. 2*, ed. Ernst Behler, Jean-Jacques Anstett and Hans Eichner (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1967), 197.

10. Cynthia Chase, in "Getting Versed: Reading Hegel with Baudelaire," *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 135, offers a similar argument when she insists that, for Hegel, the philosophical idea appears only in a language "susceptible of memorization and inscription," that is, in verse.

11. *Glas* 9a.

12. *Jenaer Schriften (Werke 2)*, 558. English translation by Susanne Klein, David L. Rochnik, and George Elliot Tucker, *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 251.

13. *Phen*, 34–41; 42–49.

14. *Phen*, 37–41; 45–49. The judgment belongs to what Hegel, in *Werke* 5:96, calls "die alte Wissenschaft." Hegel did not develop a full-fledged theory of the speculative proposition. As Jean-Luc Nancy, in *The Speculative Remark*, trans. Celine Surprenant (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 75–76, points out, it is more appropriate to speak of "the field entitled 'the speculative proposition'" than of a theory of the speculative proposition. "The yet necessary speculative theory of syntax is dispersed and is disarticulated from text to text; it goes absent where one was expecting it, and it is brought out in unpredictable contexts—never in the pure style of *theory*." For the relation between speculative sentence and logical judgment see also *Wissenschaft der Logik (Werke 5–6)*, 92–94; English translation by A. V. Miller, *Hegel's Science of Logic* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1989), 90–92. Further references will be given in the form *Logic*, 90; 5:92, with the first page number referring to the translation, the second to the original.

15. *Logic*, 90; 5:92–93, "der Sinn scheint daher zu sein, daß der Unterschied geleugnet werde, der doch zugleich im Satze unmittelbar vorkommt."

16. The pejorative German word *Räsonnieren* connotes superficiality, wordiness, and a know-all attitude.

17. See *Logic*, 630, "What the judgement enunciates to start with is that *the subject is the predicate*; but since the predicate is supposed *not* to be what the subject is, we

are faced with a *contradiction*." 6:310, "*Das Subjekt ist das Prädikat*, ist zunächst das, was das Urteil aussagt; aber da das Prädikat nicht das sein soll, was das Subjekt ist, so ist ein *Widerspruch* vorhanden."

18. *Logic*, 415; 6:43, "Wenn nämlich z.B. auf die Frage »was ist eine Pflanze?« die Antwort gegeben wird »*eine Pflanze ist—eine Pflanze*«, so wird die Wahrheit eines solchen Satzes von der ganzen Gesellschaft, an der sie erprobt wird, zugleich zugegeben und zugleich ebenso einstimmig gesagt werden, daß damit *nichts* gesagt ist."

19. The German language suggests that in order to speak about (*über*) something, one has to be above (*über*) it. The fact that the predicate, as the universal term, gives meaning to the singular and as such undefined subject distinguishes the logical judgment from any other grammatical proposition. See *Logic*, "We may take this opportunity of remarking, too, that though a *proposition* has a subject and predicate in the grammatical sense, this does not make it a *judgement*. The latter requires that the predicate be related to the subject . . . as a universal to a particular or individual." 6:305, "Bei dieser Gelegenheit kann auch angeführt werden, daß ein Satz zwar im grammatische Sinne ein Subjekt und ein Prädikat hat, aber darum noch kein Urteil ist. Zu letzterem gehört, daß das Prädikat sich zum Subjekt . . . als ein Allgemeines zu einem Besonderen oder Einzelnen verhalte."

20. *Frühe Schriften (Werke 1)*, 235, "Der Philosoph muß ebensoviel ästhetische Kraft besitzen als der Dichter." English translation by Thomas Pfau, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*, ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 155.

21. Pfau, 156; 1:236, "So müssen endlich Aufgeklärte und Unaufgeklärte sich die Hand reichen." The *Systemprogramm* continues: "mythology must become philosophical in order to make the people reasonable, and philosophy must turn mythological in order to make the philosophers sensuous" ("die Mythologie muß philosophisch werden und das Volk vernünftig, und die Philosophie muß mythologisch werden, um die Philosophen sinnlich zu machen"). Note that the text uses the same expression with respect to the philosophers (*sinnlich machen*) that we find in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* with respect to the concept in the ordinary sense of the term (Kant, B299: "einen abgesonderten Begriff sinnlich zu machen").

22. *Logic*, 91; 5:93, "so ist auch das Nichtidentische des Subjekts und Prädikats wesentliches Moment."

23. *Logic*, 91; 5:93, "dies ist im Urteile nicht ausgedrückt."

24. The first sentence of the first chapter of the *Science of Logic* might be an example: "*Being pure being*, without any further determination"; 5:82, "*Sein, reines Sein*,—ohne alle weitere Bestimmung."

25. Gertrude Stein, "Sacred Emily" (1913), *Stein: Writings 1903–1932* (New York: Library of America, 1999), 395.

26. In his critique of assertionism, McCumber argues that Hegelian dialectic proceeds "in names rather than assertions." He credits names with the capacity of presenting the movement of self-differentiation and self-mediation describing them as "not *merely* immediate unities, but unities which have an intrinsic pull to bring forth other contents." See *The Company of Words. Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 131.

27. Consider Hegel's aphorism from the wastebook, *Miscellaneous*, 248, "The questions which philosophy does not answer are answered in that they should not be so posed."

28. Nancy, 77.

29. I agree with Hirt when he suggests that Hegel “fut avec Platon, du point de vue de la visée de la constitution d’un discours proprement philosophique, à la fois le plus grand ennemi de la poésie et le plus grand poète de la philosophie.” André Hirt, *Versus: Hegel et la Philosophie à l’Épreuve de la Poésie* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1999), 15.

30. *Phen*, 40; 48, “die dialektische Bewegung des Satzes selbst; das wirkliche Spekulative.”

31. *Phen*, 40; 48, “es kann hierüber erinnert werden, daß die dialektische Bewegung gleichfalls Sätze zu ihren Teilen oder Elementen habe; die aufgezeigte Schwierigkeit scheint daher immer zurückzukehren.”

32. *Phen*, 39; 47, “der philosophische Satz, weil er Satz ist, erweckt die Meinung des gewöhnlichen Verhältnisses des Subjekts und Prädikats, und des gewohnten Verhaltens des Wissens.”

33. *Logic*, 90; 5:93, “es muß hierüber sogleich im Anfange diese allgemeine Bemerkung gemacht werden, daß der Satz, in Form eines Urteils, nicht geschickt ist, spekulative Wahrheiten auszudrücken.”

34. *Phen*, 41; 49, “Die Darstellung muß, der Einsicht in die Natur des Spekultativen getreu, die dialektische Form behalten und nichts hereinnehmen, als insofern es begriffen wird und der Begriff ist.”

35. While Kant is concerned about limiting the realm of dialectics because it is a logic of illusion (*Logik des Scheins* KRV, B86), Hegel embraces dialectics for the same reason. Hegel brackets *Schein* and *Erscheinung* and takes further Kant’s claim that every object of knowledge is always already appearance (*Erscheinung*).

36. *Phen*, 40; 48, “nachdem aber die Dialektik vom Beweise getrennt worden, ist in der Tat der Begriff des philosophischen Beweisens verloren gegangen.”

37. I am indebted here to discussions of rhythm by Jean-Luc Nancy (see, for example, *Les Muses* [Paris: Galilée, 2001], 45–48) and Trinh T. Minh-ha (see, for example, *Cinema Interval* [New York: Routledge, 1999], 261–63).

38. *Phen*, 38; 46, “Dieser Konflikt der Form eines Satzes überhaupt, und der sie zerstörenden Einheit des Begriffs ist dem ähnlich, der im Rhythmus zwischen dem Metrum und dem Akzente statt findet. Der Rhythmus resultiert aus der schwebenden Mitte und Vereinigung beider. So soll auch im philosophischen Satze die Identität des Subjekts und Prädikats den Unterschied derselben, den die Form des Satzes ausdrückt, nicht vernichten, sondern ihre Einheit als eine Harmonie hervorgehen.”

39. *Phen*, 38; 46, “Formell kann das Gesagte so ausgedrückt werden, daß die Natur des Urteils oder Satzes überhaupt . . . durch den spekulativen Satz zerstört wird . . . den Gegenstoß zu jenem Verhältnisse enthält.”

40. *Phen*, 37; 45, “ein ruhendes Subjekt, das unbewegt die Akzidenzen trägt.”

41. *Phen*, 37; 45, “dies Subjekt macht die Basis aus . . . auf der die Bewegung hin und wieder läuft.”

42. *Phen*, 38; 46, “das Denken, statt im Übergange vom Subjekte zum Prädikate weiter zu kommen, . . . findet . . . das Subjekt unmittelbar auch im Prädikate.”

43. *Phen*, 38; 46, “zu dem Gedanken des Subjekts . . . zurückgeworfen.”

44. *Phen*, 38; 46, “Sein soll hier nicht Prädikat, sondern das Wesen sein; dadurch scheint Gott aufzuhören, das zu sein, was er durch die Stellung des Satzes ist, nämlich das feste Subjekt.”

45. *Phen*, 37; 45, "Indem der Begriff das eigene Selbst des Gegenstandes ist, das sich als sein Werden darstellt, ist es nicht ein ruhendes Subjekt, das unbewegt die Akzidenzien trägt, sondern der sich bewegende und seine Bestimmungen in sich zurücknehmende Begriff."

46. *Phen*, 37; 45, "in dieser Bewegung geht jenes ruhende Subjekt zu Grunde."

47. *Phen*, 38; 46, "das das Subjekt verloren geht."

48. *Phen*, 39; 47, "Das Denken verliert daher so sehr seinen festen gegenständlichen Boden, den es am Subjekt hatte, als es im Prädikat darauf zurückgeworfen wird, und in diesem nicht in sich sondern in das Subjekt des Inhalts zurückgeht."

49. *Phen*, 38; 46, "indem jenes erste Subjekt in die Bestimmungen selbst eingeht und ihre Seele ist."

50. *Phen*, 37–39; 45–47, "erleidet;" "fühlte sich . . . gehemmt und . . . zurückgeworfen;" "auf diesem ungewohnten Hemmen beruhen großen Teils die Klagen."

51. *Phen*, 37–38; 46, "Indem aber jenes erste Subjekt in die Bestimmungen selbst eingeht und ihre Seele ist, findet das zweite Subjekt, nämlich das wissende, jenes, mit dem es schon fertig sein und *worüber hinaus* es in sich zurückgehen will, noch im Prädikate vor, und statt in dem Bewegen des Prädikats das Tuende . . . sein zu können, hat es vielmehr mit dem Selbst des Inhalts noch zu tun, soll nicht für sich, sondern *mit diesem zusammensein*."

52. *Phen*, 36; 44, "verhält sich jenes negativ gegen den aufgefaßten Inhalt, weiß ihn zu widerlegen und zu nichte zu machen."

53. *Phen*, 32; 40, "Statt in den immanenten Inhalt der Sache einzugehen, übersieht er immer das Ganze, und steht *über* dem einzelnen Dasein, von dem er spricht, das heißt, er sieht es gar nicht. Das wissenschaftliche Erkennen erfordert aber vielmehr, sich dem Leben des Gegenstandes zu übergeben." The verb *übersieht* means "overlooks" in the double sense of "surveys" and "ignores."

54. *Phen*, 36; 44, "dadurch daß diese Reflektion ihre Negativität selbst nicht zum Inhalte gewinnt, ist sie überhaupt nicht *in* der Sache."

55. *Phen*, 36; 44, "es ist die Reflexion in das leere Ich, die Eitelkeit seines Wissens.—Diese Eitelkeit drückt aber nicht nur dies aus, daß dieser Inhalt eitel, sondern auch, daß diese Einsicht selbst es ist."

56. *Phen*, 37; 45, "der feste Boden, den das Raisonieren an dem ruhenden Subjekte hat, schwankt."

57. See Catherine Malabou's analysis, in *L'Avenir de Hegel. Plasticité, Temporalité, Dialectique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1996), of Hegel's investment in offering a vivid, concrete, three-dimensional, "plastic" explication (*plastische Darstellung*) of the speculative.

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A volume in the SUNY series
in Hegelian Studies
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STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS
www.sunypress.edu

ISBN 0-7914-6755-4



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